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INDIA.

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THE ORIENTAL ANNUAL.

By the Rev. Hobart Caunter, B.D.

With 22 Illustrations by W. Daniell, Esq. R.A.

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"Truth is strange.
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LORD BYRON.

IN THREE VOLUMES

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OF

THE THIRD VOLUME.

Historical Summary.

A. D. 1603.

In the year of the Hegira 1014, Prince Selim ascended the imperial throne of the Moguls immediately upon the death of his father Akbar, who expired at Agra, amid the general lamentations of his subjects, who loved him as their father, admired him as their leader, and feared him as their prince.

1604.

Heg. 1015. A conspiracy was formed in favour of Chusero, Jehangire's eldest son. When it was discovered, the prince appeared in arms and broke out into open rebellion. He marched to Delhi, ravaged the country, and laid the suburbs under contribution. Many houses were burned, many persons perished, and thousands were utterly ruined. Jehangire, hearing of these outrages, immediately commanded his captain-general to put the army in motion and pursue his rebellious son. Suspecting that officer's loyalty, however, he recalled him just as the latter was about to quit the city gates, and gave command of the imperial forces to Ferid Bochari, paymaster-general of the army, who pursued the rebel to Lahore, where he was entirely routed. As the person of Chusero was known to the troops generally, they did not attempt his life, and he was permitted to escape. He was, however, soon after taken prisoner, which put an end to the rebellion.—In the same year a peace was concluded with Persia.

A. D. 1609. Heg. 1018. Shere Afkun, a Turkoman noble, slew the Suba of Bengal, and was immediately killed by the latter's troops.

1610. Heg. 1019. Jehangire married the beautiful widow of Shere Afkun, Noor Mahil.

1611. Heg. 1020. The Afgans, a fierce and untractable people, inhabiting the mountains beyond the Indus, rebelled, and entering Cabul with a considerable army, committed the most cruel excesses. The rebellion was suppressed by Nadili Meidani, who pursued the Afgans to their native mountains, putting a great part of their ill-disciplined troops to the sword. The close of this year was distinguished by two formidable insurrections, one in Bengal, the other in Behar; the former was put an end to by Sujait Chan, who, for this signal service, was advanced by his imperial master to the title of Rustum Zimân, which signifies the Hercules of the age. The insurrection in Behar was quashed in consequence of the rebel Cuttub, who assumed to be the Prince Chusero, being killed by a brick-bat.

1613. Heg. 1022. Prince Purvez was despatched with an army against Amar Sinka, Rana or Prince of Odipoor, in the Deccan, who had attacked and defeated the imperial troops. He was unsuccessful. Jehangire recalled him and sent Mohabet Chan to replace him. The army, however, being reduced by disease, and in a state of insubordination, Mohabet was not in a condition to oppose the Rana. Prince Churrum, the Emperor's third son, was consequently sent with fresh troops to supersede Mohabet. He entered by the mountains, engaged the enemy, and obliged him to sue for peace.

Heg. 1023. Chan Azim and Man Singh, the two principal supporters of Chusero's rebellion, died. *They were both distinguished under the reign of Akbar, who advanced them to high offices in the state. A.D. 1614.

Heg. 1024. Sir Thomas Roe, the English ambassador to the court of Agra, arrived at Boorampoor, where he was courteously received by Sultan Purvez, governor of that province. He was subsequently received by the Emperor at Ajmere with the greatest affability and kindness. Disturbances in Guzzarat and Cabul quelled. 1615.

Heg. 1025. Sultan Churrum's name was changed to Shah Jehan, or King of the World. The princes of the Deccan having rebelled, Shah Jehan forced them to sue for peace, for which eminent service he rose into high favour with the Emperor. 1616.

Heg. 1027. The Vizier Actemad-ul-Dowla, father-in-law of the Emperor, died. Aurungzebe born. His mother was the Sultana Kudsia, daughter of Asiph Jah. The name Aurungzebe signifies, the Ornament of the Throne. 1618.

Heg. 1029. Shah Jehan marched a second time into the Deccan, and reduced to subjection the princes, who had again rebelled. His eldest brother, Chusero, was delivered into his hands. 1620.

Heg. 1030. Chusero was assassinated under the walls of Azere by command of Shah Jehan. 1621.

Hig. 1031. Shah Jehan assumed the imperial purple, attacked the fort at Agra, but was repulsed by Asiph Jah, the new Vizier, and brother of the Sultana Noor Jehan. 1622.

Heg. 1032. Jehangire prepared to march against his rebellious son, who endeavoured to justify his rebellion. 1623.

A. D. 1623. An action ensued in which Shah Jehan was entirely defeated. Sultan Purvez arrived in the camp, and under the tuition of Mohabet received command of the imperial forces. He defeated the royal insurgent upon the banks of the Nerbuddah.

1624. Heg. 1033. Shah Jehan entered Bengal, defeated the Suba, took possession of that province and likewise of Bahar. Prince Purvez advanced with the imperial army and again defeated his rebellious brother, who fled towards the Deccan, was joined by the Rajah of Ambere, and besieged Boorampoor, but was repulsed.

1625. Heg. 1034. Shah Jehan was pardoned by the Emperor. Chandahar, a fortified town of Afghanistan was taken by the Persians under the command of Shah Abbas their King, who appeared before it in person. The Usbeck Tartars invaded the province of Ghizni, but after an obstinate resistance of nine months were driven out of the empire.

1626. Heg. 1035. Mohabet was accused of treason, and summoned before the Emperor. He obeyed, was grossly insulted, surprised Jehangire in his tent, made him prisoner, and carried him off to his own camp. The Vizier attempted a rescue, but was defeated with great slaughter. Mohabet resigned his power, was obliged to fly, and declared himself in favour of Shah Jehan.

1627. Heg. 1036. Jehangire died. Dawir Buxsh, grandson of the late Emperor, was raised to the throne, deposed, and murdered. Shah Jehan arrived at Agra, and was proclaimed Emperor.

1628. Heg. 1037. Shah Jehan ascended the throne of the Moguls.

The Light of the World.



The Light of the World.

THE morning dawned upon two travellers in the midst of a blighted wilderness. As the sun threw its level rays over the horizon, they flooded a plain where no boundary could be traced but the sky, and from which the dominion of vegetation was almost wholly withdrawn; there being nothing to relieve the dull, uniform sterility of the scene but occasionally the trunks of a few stunted trees, which appeared to stand there only as so many legible records of the utter barrenness of the spot. These sad wayfarers rose from beneath the scanty shades of one of those skeletons of the wilderness to pursue a journey with a deplorable prospect before them. They were far advanced upon a wide inhospitable desert, where no welcome serai was to be seen, and where the passenger was seldom met. The refreshing well was nowhere found in these dreary and unfruitful solitudes.

The travellers were a Tartar and his wife, who, in consequence of a marriage not approved of by their respective families, had fled from their country to seek that home in another which was denied to them in their own. The man was handsome, of noble carriage, possessing all the generous qualities of his race; bold, active, enterprising, with great capability of endurance, and withal of a mild and placable spirit. The woman was young, beautiful, but extremely delicate; and, to crown her husband's misery and her own, she was about to become a mother. When they arose on this sad morning, they consumed the last of their provisions. They had only a small quantity of water in a leathern bottle, which the Tartar made his fainting wife drink before they proceeded on their way. What a deplorable condition! To linger was certain death, and to advance seemed only a dallying with hope:—there appeared no chances of relief. They had several days' journey to perform without being provided with any sustenance for so long and arduous a travel; and the chances of meeting with passengers were so remote as to render their perishing in the wilderness almost a certainty.

The Tartar's wife was mounted upon a small

lean horse, which for the last several days had been so sparingly fed that it could scarcely proceed. The wretched woman was unconscious of the extent of her danger. She knew not that the whole of their provisions were exhausted, save one small rice cake which the tender husband had reserved for her use. He kept from her the awful fact of their utter destitution, lest in her precarious condition it should bring on premature labour where no assistance could be obtained, and she would thus probably perish. In spite of the misery of his situation, he still entertained the hope that he should obtain relief; and trusting in the mercy of Him who guides the wanderer as well in the wilderness as in the populous country, he pursued his journey, though with a heavy and foreboding heart. As the sun rose, the heat became intolerable. There was no shelter from its scorching rays. The anxious Tartar held an umbrêlla over the head of his wife as he walked painfully along by the side of her lean ambling pony; but after a while his arm became so cramped that it was with difficulty he could bear the weight of the chatta. This, though not great, was the more sensibly felt from the elevated position in which he was obliged to keep his arms. He was, however, marvellously sustained

by the excitement of his anxiety for the dear object near him, who bore with unrepining endurance privations which in her state were especially deplorable. They travelled through a long and toilsome day. The rice cake was consumed long before they halted for the night.

There being no shelter near, the husband fixed the handle of his umbrella into the ground, and throwing over it a thin palampore,* formed a kind of rude tent, under which his wife might repose without immediate exposure to the unwholesome night air. She was exhausted with fatigue; her tongue was parched with thirst, and the rapid increase of circulation too plainly told that fever was fast coming on. To attempt to depict the husband's agony were a vain endeavour. Without food—without water—his wife actually in the pains of labour—with no hope of relief—in the midst of a vast wilderness,—which even the wild beasts shunned as a solitude where only death and desolation reigned,—he had no thought but that both must lie down and die. The sufferings of his hapless companion were appalling, yet she bore them without a murmur. The severity of her pangs aggravated that thirst by which she had

* A counterpane.

been so long and so grievously oppressed. He had but one alternative, and did not hesitate to adopt it in such a trying emergency. His wife's agonies were every moment increasing. He quitted the insecure canopy which he had erected for her temporary accommodation, seized his dagger, ran to the pony, and, in a paroxysm of tumultuous anxiety to save the life of the object dearest to him upon earth, plunged it desperately into the animal's throat. Having caught the blood in a wooden trencher, he bore it to the tent.

During his short absence, his wife had become a mother. The cry of the poor babe raised within him, at this moment, emotions of parental joy; but these were in an instant stifled by the consciousness of those awful perils by which he was surrounded. He put the bowl to the lips of the suffering mother: she took a small quantity, and was in a slight degree refreshed. He now kindled a fire upon the wide blasted desert, and broiled some flesh of the animal which he had just slaughtered. It was tough and rank. The juices, however, of this unpalatable repast subdued in a degree the yearnings of hunger and the dreadful pangs of thirst.

On the morrow, when the sun again cast its

vivid light upon the vast level of the wilderness, this wretched pair arose to pursue their journey. The Tartar dreaded the increased difficulties which he should have now to overcome. His companion was so weak that she could scarcely stand; yet she was obliged to carry her infant, as he was loaded with their baggage and other necessaries, that had hitherto been confined to the back of the pony. They had scarcely commenced the prosecution of their melancholy journey, when they were cheered with the prospect of relief. Not more than half a coss* distance before them, a beautiful lake seemed to smile in the morning sun, and to invite the suffering travellers to bathe their limbs in its limpid waters. The margin was dotted with groups of trees, displaying a luxuriant foliage, which was reflected in the still mirror below and promised a grateful shade to the travel-worn passenger. Oxen appeared to be grazing on its margin, and every now and then, in the luxury of the most exquisite enjoyment, to hide themselves under the pellucid surface of its calm waters. Beyond, a gorgeous city reared its battlements amid the solemn silence of the desert, over which it seemed to cast the glow of its splendour, and to speak

* The coss is about two miles.

with a mute but eloquent voice of cheering to the heart of the forlorn wanderer, of which they alone can appreciate the magic force who have braved the perils of the wilderness, and seen death stand before them face to face amid its vast and inhospitable solitudes.

The Tartar and his wife, overjoyed at the sight, made the best of their way towards the lake and the city, in which the stir of busy life seemed to prevail; for they saw, as they imagined, multitudes of their fellow-beings issue from its gates and spread over the adjoining plain. The scene to the excited imagination of the travellers was animated beyond description. The sight of human habitations, and of human beings who could afford them succour; of water in which they might assuage the pangs of the most painful of bodily privations; of houses in which they might find shelter after their perilous journey—all gave such a stimulus to their exertions, that even the weak and suffering mother, with the assistance of her husband's arm, was able to go onward with tolerable firmness.

When they had proceeded for some time, the lake and the city still appeared before them, but no nearer. It seemed to them as if they had

been moving their limbs without advancing a single step. They still, however, pressed forward under the delusive expectation of reaching the fair goal of their hopes; but after a while the lake began suddenly to disappear—the city was by degrees shrouded in a mist, which dispersed in the course of a few minutes, and, to their consternation, they saw nothing save the wide arid expanse of the desert before them. The unhappy woman sank upon the earth in a paroxysm of mental agony. The miserable man was now perfectly overwhelmed with despair. He feared that his wife was dying. She could no longer carry the infant; there was, consequently, but one alternative. The struggle of nature was a severe one, but no choice remained between death and parental subjugation. The desire of life prevailed; and it was determined, after an agonizing conflict, that the infant must be sacrificed. The mother's tears were dried up on her burning cheeks, and the father's pangs were lost in the anxieties of the husband. The appeals of nature were only stifled by louder appeals in both their bosoms; and, however fierce the repugnance, it was to be resisted and overcome. The death of their babe was the least of two evils; they therefore submitted to the stern severity of their condition.

It was agreed by the half-distracted parents, that the new-born pledge of their affections should be abandoned. The mother having kissed it fervently, consigned it to the arms of her husband, who, having taken it to a spot where the stunted stock of a tree protruded from the scorching sand, placed it under the scanty shade of this bare emblem of sterility; and, having covered it with leaves, left it to the mercy of that God who can protect the babe in the desert as well as the sovereign on his throne. On rejoining his wife, the Tartar found her so weak that he feared she would be unable to proceed. Though released from the burden of her infant, her prostration of strength was so extreme, from the united effects of mental and bodily suffering, that she could scarcely rise from the earth. The pangs of thirst were again becoming horrible; still, after a severe struggle, she rose, and the wretched pair pursued their journey in silence and in agony.

They had not proceeded far before the invincible yearnings of nature prevailed over mere physical torment, and the bereaved mother called in a voice of piteous anguish for her child. She could no longer endure the pains of separation. The idea of having voluntarily consented to become

the instrument of its death, was a horror which increased with every step, and she sank exhausted upon the sand. The sun, now rising towards its meridian, poured upon her the fiery effulgence of its beams. The husband's heart was subdued by her sufferings. Dashing a tear from his cheek, he undertook to return and restore their infant to the arms of its distracted mother. Fixing the handle of his umbrella again in the ground and throwing the palampore over it, he placed his wife under that frail covering, and immediately retraced his steps. With a sad heart he reached the spot where he had lately deposited the infant; but what was his consternation at beholding the leaves removed, and a black snake coiled round it, with its hideous mouth opposed to that of his child! In a frenzy of desperation he rushed forward; but instantly arrested by the instinct of paternal fear, he stood before the objects at once of his tenderest interest and of his terror, as if he had been suddenly converted into stone. The previous motion, however, had evidently alarmed the monster; for it gradually uncoiled itself from its victim without committing the slightest injury, and retired into the hollow trunk which marked this memorable spot. The father snatched

up his child, and bore it in ecstasy to its mother; but she was extended under the palampore in the last struggle of expiring nature. Her feeble spirit had been overborne by her lengthened sufferings of mind and body, and she now lay at the point of death. She raised her eyes languidly, received the babe with a faint smile upon her bosom, and tenderly kissed it. The effort overcame her, and she fainted. After a short time she rallied—but it was only to die. The husband hung over her with mute but intense tenderness, cursing in his heart, with a bitterness which that very tenderness aggravated, those relatives who had caused the death of all he valued upon earth, and rendered him the most desolate of men.

"Aiass," said the dying woman, "dig me a grave in the wilderness; don't leave this poor body to the beasts of prey. We shall be restored to each other. There is a paradise beyond this world where all the good meet and are blessed: we shall be among them. I die happy in the possession of your love, and in the consciousness of never having forfeited my claim to it."

The Tartar could not speak. He pressed the wife of his bosom to that heart which she had so fondly engrossed, and scalding tears of

agony overflowed his cheeks. He threw his arms tenderly round her, his heart throbbing audibly, and buried his bursting temples in the hot sand beside her. She spoke not,—she stirred not; he raised his head to kiss her fading lips—her eye was rayless—those lips were slightly parted, but fixed; a faint smile was on her cheek, yet no breath came. She was dead!

CHAPTER II.

Aiass raised himself from the earth, cast his eye with a look of reproach towards heaven, and gave way to a burst of sorrow; then bringing the strong energies of his mind to resistance, the ebullition shortly subsided, and he bowed to the stroke with the fortitude of a man who looks upon endurance as his province, and upon calamity as his lot. During the whole of this melancholy day he did not quit the body. His wife's dying request was in his ears and in his memory—"Dig me a grave in the wilderness," and he resolved to comply with it. He passed twelve lingering hours in a broiling sun, occasionally casting himself under the palampore beside the corpse, close to which his infant slept unconscious of its loss. His thirst became at length so excessive that his throat and tongue swelled, and he began to apprehend suffocation. His face was blistered and sore, his eyes inflamed, from the combined effects of weeping, and the glare of an ardent sun upon

the white sand of the desert. Towards evening he was so overcome by his sufferings that he laid him down to die. The infant cried for nutriment, but he had none to give it. Taking the linen from his body, which was saturated with perspiration, he put it to the babe's mouth: this kept it alive.

The tongue of Aiass had by this time enlarged to such an immense size that he could not move it. The inflammation was so great that he was unable to close his lips. Expecting death every moment, he pressed still closer to his bosom the innocent pledge of conjugal affection, when he was unexpectedly relieved by the cracking of his swollen tongue. A copious discharge of blood followed, which passed into his stomach, and somewhat assuaged the fever that burned within him. He was so much relieved by this effort of nature, that he almost immediately sank into a short but refreshing slumber.

The sun had gone down in brightness; and when he awoke, the stars were looking upon him from their thrones of light, and the whole heavens smiling above him in their beauty. The intense, calm azure of the sky seemed an emblem of the repose that dwells there. A gentle breeze had broken the oppressive stagnation of the air,

and fanned his hot, blistered features as with an angel's wing. His energies revived. Though the thirst by which he was still parched affected him greatly, still it was in some degree mitigated by that balmy breath of heaven, which he felt now for the first time since he had entered upon the desert. He commenced his melancholy task of digging a grave to enclose the remains of an object who had been dearer to him than his own life. He took his crease—a short dagger with a wide double-edged blade,—and began to remove the sand. It was an arduous and sorrowful labour. After an earnest application of mind and body for two hours, he succeeded in sinking a hole four feet deep. Into this he tenderly lowered the body of his departed wife, filled up the pit, and throwing himself upon it, lay there until morning. There was a discharge of blood from his tongue once or twice during the night, which more than probably saved his life.

Towards dawn he fell into a deep and death-like sleep. He was at length awaked by feeling himself severely shaken. Upon looking up, he perceived himself to be surrounded by strangers. They were travellers on their way to Lahore. They gave him food and water: the infant was fed

with goat's milk by means of a sponge. His strength being now somewhat recruited, he joined the travellers, and advanced with them by easy stages to their destination.

Lahore was the field in which the Tartar's talents soon displayed themselves. Aiass was no ordinary man. He attracted the notice of the Emperor Akbar, who had a singular faculty in discriminating merit, and from that moment rose to distinction. Akbar perceived his value, and made it available to promote the interests of his empire. The Tartar advanced by a regular but rapid progression until he became high treasurer of the state. He was a chief political organ of one of the wisest sovereigns which history celebrates, and held in great respect by the whole nation. The Emperor reposed implicit confidence in him: it was well deserved, and ended only with his life.

The daughter of Aiass, who had been so providentially preserved in the desert, as she grew up, excelled in personal attractions all the loveliest women of the East, and was therefore honoured with the designation of Mher-ul-Nissa: the Sun of Women. The extraordinary event which had distinguished her birth seemed but as the prognostic of future distinction. The child of the desert

secret from his father, who esteemed the Turkoman too highly to approve of the prince's hostility towards him, and had, moreover, expressed his satisfaction at the latter's marriage with Mher-ul-Nissa. Selim, however, secretly fomented jealousies among the Omrahs against the popular, as well as imperial favourite. These were easily excited; for there will never be found wanting persons ready to traduce those to whom they are conscious of being inferior in moral excellence; and especially in courts where ambition is the ruling passion, nothing can be less difficult than to provoke the envy of men whose sole aim is aggrandisement, and who are therefore naturally disposed to think ill of any who happen to contravene those aims, or to cross the path of their ambition. The prince, therefore, had little difficulty in accomplishing his purpose. He secretly disseminated calumnies to the injury of Shere Afkun, who in disgust retired from court into Bengal, where he obtained from the governor the vicegerency of Burdwan, a considerable district in that province.

Here he lived undisturbed until the death of Akbar, which caused the sincere regret of the whole nation, who in mourning the decease of

their Emperor deplored the loss of a great and a good man. When Prince Selim became sovereign, his passion for the daughter of Aiass revived in full force. The restraint being removed under which the smothered flame had been so long and so painfully suppressed, it burst forth with increased fierceness. He was now absolute; and being determined to possess the object of his disappointed love, he made advances towards a reconciliation with Shere Afkun; but the brave Turkoman for a time resisted all his importunities, perceiving their object, and resolving to part neither with his wife nor with his honour, as he could not resign the one without relinquishing the other. His strength was prodigious, and his bravery equal to his strength; his integrity was unimpeached, his reputation high, and he was alike feared and respected by all classes. Upon every occasion where danger was imminent, he was foremost to encounter it; whilst his desperate valour was the theme of many a romance and of many a song. His bodily vigour was so great that he had slain a lion single-handed; from which circumstance he obtained the cognomen of Shere Afkun, or the Lion-slayer; his original name being Asta Jillo. He was, how-

ever, no less esteemed for his virtues than for his bravery; and Mher-ul-Nissa fully appreciated his rare endowments. She was proud of his reputation. To her the Emperor's feelings were no secret; but she avoided his presence, in obedience to the wishes of her husband, who was not altogether without his suspicions that the hostility which the new sovereign manifested towards him was solely on her account. He continued, therefore, in the province of Bengal, without visiting the imperial capital.

Not long, however, after Jehangire had ascended the throne of the Moguls, Shere Afkun was invited to court, whither, after repeated solicitations, he repaired, trusting to his own high reputation for security against any tyrannical exercise of the sovereign power. Upon his arrival, he was much caressed by the Emperor, in order to lull suspicion. Open and generous himself, he suspected no treachery in others. He left his wife at Burdwan, not willing to expose her to the chance of attention from the sovereign, that might keep alive former predilections, and renew his royal rival's criminal hostility.

The young Emperor's court was splendid in the extreme. He was fond of state; but hunt-

ing being his passion, a day was appointed for the chase. All the chief nobles of the empire attended, hoping to have an opportunity of exhibiting before their royal master their skill and prowess in a pursuit at all times extremely dangerous in eastern countries. A vast train, swelling to the number of an army, issued from the gates of Lahore. The cavalcade was prodigious. Upwards of five hundred elephants, upon which rode the Emperor and his court, led the van towards a jungle where the quarry was expected to be roused. The howdah of the royal elephant was covered by a silken canopy, and its whole caparison profusely ornamented with precious metals. Thousands of spears glittered in the sun, the rays of which were reflected in streams of glowing light from those various arms borne by this motley cavalcade. The neighing of steeds was mingled with the busy hum of men who thronged to the scene of exciting enjoyment.

Shere Afkun accompanied the court on horseback, armed only with the sword with which he had slain a lion,—having by that act immortalised his name in the annals of his country. His royal master showed him a very marked respect, occasionally consulting him respecting the chase; thus

aggravating the jealousy of the nobles, already sufficiently fierce against him. He received the Emperor's courtesies with a cold but modest respect, not entirely forgetting former unkindness, though without suspicion of future injury.

The royal party at length entered the jungle, where the forest haunts of the lion and tiger were shortly explored. The hunters soon enclosed a mighty beast of the latter species; of which Jehangire being apprized, immediately proceeded to the spot. He began to entertain a hope that the period so long desired was arrived when he should have an opportunity of exposing the life of his former rival in an encounter from which the latter would have little chance of escaping. Seeing the tiger at a short distance, surrounded by hunters, lashing the ground with its tail and giving other tokens of savage hostility, the despot demanded of those around him, who would venture to attack the ferocious beast?

All stood silent and confounded. They had not expected such a proposal; nor did they appear to entertain any wish to expose their lives in a conflict in which more danger than glory would be reaped.

As none of them advanced, and the Emperor

began to knit his brows and show symptoms of displeasure, Shere Afkun already entertained a hope that the enterprise would devolve upon him; but, to his extreme mortification, three Omrahs stepped forward and offered to encounter the forest tyrant. Jehangire cast upon the bold Turkoman a glance of such unequivocal expression, that his pride kindled, and he longed to show how little backward he was to engage the brindled foe; but as three nobles had first challenged the encounter, he could not set aside their prior claim to a distinction which they insisted upon striving for.

Upon receiving the approbation of their royal master, they severally prepared for the encounter, dismounting from their elephants, and arming themselves with sword, spear, and shield. Shere Afkun, fearing that he was likely to be rivalled, and that his fame would be tarnished by inferior men undertaking a conflict which by his silence he might be supposed to have declined, advanced, and presenting himself before the sovereign, said firmly: "To attack an unarmed creature with weapons is neither fair nor manly: it is taking an advantage of an animal which cannot plead against such injustice but by a fierce retaliation. Such is not in accordance with the character of

the truly brave. All manual contests should be undertaken upon equal terms. The Deity has given limbs and sinews to man as well as to tigers, and has imparted reason to the former in order to countervail the deficiency of strength. Let the nobles of your imperial majesty, then, lay aside their arms and attack the enemy with those only with which the Deity has provided them. If they shrink from such an encounter, I am prepared to undertake it."

Jehangire rewarded the speaker with a smile of gracious approbation; but his Omrahs, one and all, declined such a perilous contest, insisting upon the madness of the enterprise. To the Emperor's infinite surprise and delight, the bold Turkoman instantly cast aside his sword and shield, and prepared to engage the tiger unarmed.

The circle of hunters, which had surrounded the forest tyrant, opened to admit the champion. The ferocious beast with which he was to engage lay at the root of a tree, gnarling hideously as its enemy approached, erecting the fur upon its tail and back, passing its tongue every now and then over the terrific fangs with which its jaws were armed, but seeming ill disposed to commence the contest. Shere Afkun was stripped to his

trousers, and his fine muscular frame, a model for an Indian Apollo, exhibited its noble proportions as he advanced cautiously but firmly towards his foe. The tiger lay upon its belly without attempting to stir, nevertheless giving evident tokens of a determination to retaliate if attacked. The ponderous paws projected from beneath its chest; and upon these it occasionally rested its head, until roused by the approach of its adversary. Every eye was fixed upon the scene; every heart throbbed with the strongest emotion of anxiety. The sovereign alone sat upon his elephant, apparently calm and undisturbed; but the deep flush upon his cheek showed that he took no ordinary interest in the approaching encounter. He did not utter a word as he saw the man whom he considered doomed to inevitable destruction march resolutely up to the prostrate tiger and strike it in the ribs with his foot. The animal, now excited to ferocious resistance, instantly sprang upon its legs, but crept backward with its face to the enemy and its belly to the ground. Shere Afkun advanced as it retreated, keeping his eyes fixed upon those of the enraged beast. At length the latter suddenly turned, and bounded forward; but was stopped by the spears of the hunters, who

still encircled it at a distance, all armed to prevent its escape. Finding its purpose foiled, it again turned, and being beyond the influence of the Turkoman's eye, prepared to make its perilous spring.

Shere Afkun now retreated in his turn, and pausing near a tree, awaited the approach of his enemy. It instantly bounded onward, sweeping its tail above the ground with an uncertain motion, but without uttering a sound. The brave champion, who from experience was well acquainted with the habits of those animals which are the terror of the jungles and their immediate neighbourhood, well knew that the creature was about to spring. Placing his right foot forward, and planting his left firmly against the projecting root of the tree, he calmly awaited the menaced peril. The tiger crouched, and uttering a short sharp growl, projected its body forward with a celerity and force which nothing could have resisted; but the wary Turkoman leaped aside as the living projectile was about to fall upon him, and turning quickly, seized his baffled foe by the tail; then swinging it round with a strength and dexterity that astonished every beholder, brought its head in such violent contact with the

tree, that for several seconds it was completely stunned. After a while, however, it recovered, but lay still and panting, not at all relishing, as it seemed, a renewal of the conflict. As the victory was not yet decided, Shere Afkun again approached the prostrate beast in order to rouse it to resistance. He kicked it several times; but it only growled, lashed its tail, showed its fangs—remaining perfectly passive under these acts of aggression.

The hero, tired of this indecisive mode of warfare, seized it again by the tail, and swinging it round as he had already done, brought its head once more in stunning contact with the tree. The blow, though severe, did not produce the same effect as before; for the enraged animal suddenly rising to the full height of its stature, turned on its aggressor with a savage roar, and seized him by the fleshy part of the thigh behind. As his trousers were loose, the tiger was somewhat deceived, and therefore, fortunately, did not take so large a mouthful as it no doubt would have done had the limb been entirely naked. Shere Afkun instantly grasped it by the windpipe, and squeezing it with all his might, soon obliged the creature to quit its

hold; but with a violent twist it freed itself from the strong gripe of its adversary, and instantly renewed the encounter.

The struggle now became indeed terrific, and the anxiety of the spectators increased in proportion. Jehangire could no longer control the feeling by which he was overborne. His parted lips, between which the tongue protruded with a quivering nervousness of motion, his eyelids so raised as to discover the entire orb of his eager, restless eyes, the tremulous aspect of his whole frame,—showed the extent of his interest in the issue of this unnatural strife.

By this time the tiger had again rallied, and having raised itself upon its hind-legs, struck both its fore-paws upon the Turkoman's breast, tearing the flesh from the bone. Shere Afkun fell under the weight of this deadly assault; but, still undismayed, after a desperate effort he contrived to roll over upon his panting foe, now nearly exhausted from its exertions and by the severe blows it had received, and forcing his hand between its extended jaws, griped it so firmly by the root of the tongue, that in a few seconds it lay strangled beneath his grasp. He then rose streaming with

blood, pointed to his dead enemy, made a salaam to the Emperor, and quitted the field grievously lacerated.

The Emperor was astounded at the issue. The champion was borne home in a palankeen, and for several weeks his life was despaired of. To the surprise of Jehangire, Shere Afkun eventually recovered, though he carried the marks of the tiger's claws to his grave. The royal rival was nevertheless determined not to forego his purpose of destroying this remarkable man, though he feared to do it openly. Meanwhile, the hero went abroad everywhere unattended, utterly unsuspicious of a design against his life. He was not conscious of having offended a human creature, and therefore did not suppose that any man living could desire his death. He lived in retirement; but whenever he appeared at court, which he occasionally did, he was always treated by the sovereign with marked respect and great apparent cordiality. This, however, was only to mask the most sanguinary intentions, which were no secret to many of the nobles, who, in common with their master, desired the destruction of a brave man because he was a hated rival.

Private orders had been given to the driver of a large elephant, to waylay the Turkoman and

tread him to death. The opportunity did not immediately occur, as the victim went abroad at uncertain periods; and though his movements were watched, it was found a difficult matter to come upon him at a favourable moment. One day, however, as he was returning from the public baths through a narrow street, observing an elephant approaching, he ordered his palankeen-bearers to turn aside and permit it to pass. As the huge animal came near, he at once perceived that there was no room for it to pass without crushing the palankeen, and thus endangering the lives of himself and attendants.

The elephant still came onward. Shere Afkun called to the mahoot to stop, but his order was disregarded. The phlegmatic Hindoo, sitting upon its neck apparently in a state of half-consciousness, took no heed of the peril of the party before him. The Omrah, seeing that it was impossible to avoid the approaching danger except by making a timely retreat, ordered his bearers to turn and carry him back to the baths; but they, terrified at the evident hazard to which they were exposed, threw down the palankeen and fled, leaving their master to settle the question of priority of right to a passage on the Em-

peror's highway. The hero, undismayed by the formidable aspect of the jeopardy by which he was menaced, sprang instantly from the ground, drew his sword, and, before the elephant could accomplish its fatal purpose, severed its trunk close at the root. The gigantic animal immediately dropped and expired. The mahoot leaped from its neck as it was in the act of falling, and escaped.

Shere Afkun, suspecting that in urging the elephant upon him the fellow had been actuated by that personal feeling which so generally exists between Hindoo and Mahomedan, forbore to pursue him, thinking the mean passions of a hireling too contemptible to rouse his indignation; he therefore allowed the offender to escape unmolested, and coolly wiping the blade of his sword, returned it to the scabbard.

Jehangire witnessed the whole scene. He had placed himself at a small lattice that overlooked the street. He was perfectly amazed, but disappointment and vexation banished from his bosom the better feelings of nature. Shere Afkun waited upon him and communicated what had passed: the Emperor extolled his bravery with warmth, and thus escaped his suspicion.

CHAPTER IV.

Repeated disappointment only served the more to exasperate the sovereign's jealousy. It raged like a furnace within him; for to exercise a due control over their actions is not the general character of despots. His peace of mind was perpetually disturbed by the fierceness of his emotions, and he became more than ever bent upon the death of his successful rival in the affections of Mher-ul-Nissa.

Shere Afkun was not permitted to remain long unmolested. Kuttub, Suba or governor of Bengal, knowing his master's wishes, and in order to ensure his future favour, hired forty ruffians to assassinate the dreaded Omrah. So confident was the latter in his own strength and valour, that he took no precaution to protect himself against secret or open enemies. He lived in a solitary house in which he retained only an aged porter, all his other servants occupying apartments at a distance. Relying upon his own cou-

rage and the vigour of his arm, he had no apprehension either of the secret assassin or the open foe.

This was a tempting opportunity. The murderers were engaged, and had been promised such a reward as should urge them to the most desperate exertions in order to ensure the consummation of their employer's wishes. They entered the apartment while their victim was asleep. A lamp hung from the ceiling and threw its dim light upon him as he reclined in profound slumber. There was no mistaking the hero as he lay with his noble head upon his arm, his expansive forehead turned towards the light, every line blended into one smooth unbroken surface denoting the perfect placidity of repose. Over his muscular frame was lightly thrown a thin coverlid, which did not entirely conceal its beautiful proportions, exhibited in the indistinct but traceable outline of the figure beneath. He slept profoundly. The murderers approached the bed and raised their daggers to strike; when one of them, touched with remorse at the idea of such an unmanly assault upon a man who had so signalised his courage and virtues, cried out, under an impulse of awakened conscience, "Hold! are

we men? What! forty to one, and afraid to encounter him awake?"

This timely interposition of the assassin's remorse saved the life of his intended victim; for the Turkoman, aroused by the manly expostulation, started from his bed, seized his sword, and retiring backward before the assassins had all entered, reached the corner of the apartment, where he prepared to defend himself to the last extremity. As he retreated, he had drawn the couch before him, thus preventing the immediate contact of his enemies, who endeavoured in vain to reach him; and as they were only armed with daggers, he cut down several of them without receiving a single wound. Urged on, however, by the great amount of the reward offered, the murderers still pressed upon him, and succeeded at length in dragging the couch from his grasp, though not before he had caused several others to pay for their temerity with their lives. He was at length exposed to the full operation of their brutal fury. Ten of his enemies already lay dead upon the floor, showing fatal evidence of the strength and celerity of his arm: there, however, remained thirty to vanquish; and, placing his back against the wall, the hero prepared for the unequal and deadly struggle.

Seeing him now entirely exposed to their assault, the ruffians rushed simultaneously forward, in the hope of being able to despatch him at once with their daggers; but they so encumbered each other by suddenly crowding upon their victim in their anxiety to prevent his escape, that they could not strike. He meanwhile, taking advantage of the confusion, laid several of them dead at his feet: nevertheless they pressed forward, and the same result followed. Shifting his ground, but still managing to keep his back against the wall, he defeated all their attempts; and such was his fearful precision in employing his sword, that not a man came within its sweep without receiving practical experience of the strength with which it was wielded. Besides those already slain, many others of the assailants fell desperately wounded. At length the rest, fearing the extermination of their whole band, betook themselves to flight, and left him without a wound.

The man who had warned Shere Afkun of his danger stood fixed in mute astonishment at the prowess of him whom he had received a commission to murder. He had been so paralysed, that he could neither join in the attack, nor defend his victim from the sanguinary assault which the lat-

-ter had so heroically defeated. He had no time for mediation. The charge had been so sudden, and the defence so marvellous, that his mind remained in a state of stagnant libration, and was restored to its proper tone only upon seeing the extraordinary issue. Perceiving himself to be alone with the man whom he had undertaken to destroy for a base bribe, his heart sank within him—he felt that he deserved to die; but his intended victim advanced, and kindly taking his hand, welcomed him as his deliverer. Having ascertained from the man's unreluctant confession by whom the assassins had been hired, the hero dismissed him with a liberal benefaction.

This remarkable exploit was repeated from mouth to mouth with a thousand exaggerations; so that wherever Shere Af'kun appeared, he was followed and pointed at as a man of superhuman powers. Songs and romances were written to extol his prowess and magnanimity. He was cheered by the populace wherever he approached. Mothers held up their babes to behold this extraordinary warrior, blessing him as he passed, and praying that their sons might emulate his virtues. He was flattered by these universal suffrages in his favour; nevertheless, in order to

avoid a recurrence of perils similar to those from which he had so recently escaped, he retired to Burdwan.

Meanwhile the Emperor, burning with secret rage at hearing the valour of his rival the theme of every tongue, gave orders to his creature, the Suba of Bengal, to seek a more favourable opportunity than he had before availed himself of, to destroy this detested Omrah: for such was his astonishing strength and dexterity, that the Suba dared not attack him openly.

Being now at a distance from court, the bold Turkoman thought himself beyond the influence of his sovereign's jealousy, and, with the natural frankness of his character, immediately cast aside all suspicion of mischief. The Suba coming with a great retinue to Burdwan, about sixty miles from the modern capital of Bengal, with a pretence of making a tour of the territory placed under his political superintendence, communicated to his officers the secret of his mission. They heard him with silent pleasure; for most of the nobles being jealous of a rival's popularity, with a mean and dastardly spirit joined readily in the scheme for his destruction.

Unsuspicious of any hostile intention towards

him, the devoted Omrah went out to meet the Suba as he was entering the town, and the latter affected to treat him with great cordiality. He rode by the governor's elephant, familiarly conversing with the nobles who formed his suite, and frequently receiving a gracious smile of approbation from the Emperor's vicegerent. He was completely thrown off his guard by this apparently courteous bearing; and abandoning himself to the generous warmth of his nature, invited the Omrahs to his abode, resolving to entertain them with a munificence equal to the liberality of his disposition; a determination which he knew his wife, the beautiful Mher-ul-Nissa, would not be backward in fulfilling. Full of these hospitable resolutions, he pressed forward with a gaiety which showed the utter absence of suspicion.

In the progress of the cavalcade, a pikeman, pretending that Shere Afkun was in the way, rudely struck his horse. In a moment the latter's suspicions were roused; his countenance darkened, and he cast around him a look of fiery indignation. Without an instant's delay, he drew his sword and clove the offender to the earth. Knowing that no soldier would have thus acted without orders, the insulted noble immediately saw that his life was

aimed at, and directly spurring his horse towards the elephant of the treacherous Suba, he tore down the howdah, seized the cowardly Kuttub by the throat, and buried his sword in the traitor's body before any of his guards could rescue him: then turning upon the Omrahs, five were almost instantly sacrificed to his just revenge.

Reeking with their blood, the avenger stood before the host, sternly braving the retribution which he saw them preparing to inflict, and hailing them with a loud defiance. He expected no quarter, and therefore determined not to yield without a struggle. His mind was braced to the extreme tension of desperate energy, and he resolved that the coveted prize of his death should be dearly won. Those who were within the immediate reach of his arm, he slew without distinction; and such was the fatal celerity of his motions, that the enemy fled before him in dismay. He did not pursue, but challenged the unequal strife. Like a grim lion he stood defiant before them, spotted with the gore of the slain, and prepared for fresh slaughter: but there was not a foe daring enough to approach him.

Terrified at his prowess, the soldiers began to discharge their arrows and matchlocks at him from

a distance. His horse, struck by a ball in the forehead, fell dead under him. Springing upon his feet, he slew several of the enemy who had ventured to rush forward in the hope of despatching him while encumbered with the housings of his fallen charger. They fled at the sight of their slain comrades, and left their unvanquished destroyer to the aim of his distant foes, who fired upon him without intermission. Covered with wounds and bleeding at every pore, the still undaunted lion-slayer called upon the Suba's officers to advance and meet him in single combat: but they one and all declined the encounter. They saw that certain death to each of them must be the issue of such a contest. It was evident, moreover, that their victim could not escape the aim of so many enemies.

At length, seeing his end approaching, the brave Turkoman, like a devout Mahomedan, turned his face towards Mecca; threw some dust upon his head by way of ablution, there being no water near; and standing up, calm and undismayed, before the armed files of his murderers, received at one discharge six balls in his body, and expired without a groan.

Thus perished one of the greatest heroes whose

exploits have had a conspicuous place in the histories of nations.

The beautiful widow was immediately transported to Delhi; but Jehangire refused to see her, whether from remorse or policy is uncertain. He ordered her to be confined in one of the worst apartments of the harem. This was exceedingly galling to her sensitive and haughty spirit.

The harem of an eastern prince is at once the penetralia of the political and social sanctuary, whence emanate all the cabals and conspiracies so rife in the cabinets of Moslem potentates: it may, therefore, be as well to give a brief description of a Mahomedan sovereign's domestic establishment.

In the harem are educated the Mogul princes, and the principal youth among the nobles destined for posts of responsibility in the empire. It is generally separated from the palace, but so nearly contiguous as to be of ready access. None are admitted within its apartments except the Emperor and those immediately attached to its several offices, the duties of which are performed by women. It is generally enclosed by lofty walls, and surrounded by spacious gardens, laid out with all the splendour of eastern magnificence, where every luxury is obtained which the appetite may

demand or money can procure. Those inmates who form the matrimonial confederacy of the Mogul potentate are among the most beautiful girls which the empire can furnish. They are taught embroidery, music, and dancing, by certain old women hired to instruct them in every blandishment that may captivate the senses and stimulate the passions. These lovely captives are never permitted to appear abroad except when the Emperor travels; and then they are conveyed in litters closed by curtains, or in boats with small cabins, admitting the light and air only through narrow Venetian blinds.

The apartments of the harem are very splendid; always, however, of course in proportion to the wealth of the prince. The favourite object of his affections exhibits the dignity and enjoys the privilege of a queen, though of a queen in captivity. While her beauty lasts, she is frequently regarded with a feeling almost amounting to idolatry: but when that beauty passes away, the warmth of love subsides, her person no longer charms, her voice ceases to impart delight, her faded cheeks and sharpened tones become disagreeable memorials of the past. Neither her song nor her lute is now heard with pleasure; for, in

the beautiful imagery of the Persian poet, "When the roses wither and the bower loses its sweetness, you have no longer the tale of the nightingale."

The favourite, however, while she continues her ascendency over the heart of her lord, is treated with sovereign respect throughout the harem. She smokes her golden-tubed hookha, the mouth-piece studded with gems; and enjoys the fresh morning breeze under a veranda that overlooks the gardens of the palace, attended by her damsels, only second to herself in attraction of person and splendour of attire.

> "Her smiling countenance resplendent shines
> With youth and loveliness; her lips disclose
> Teeth white as jasmine blossoms; silky curls
> Luxuriant shade her cheeks; and every limb,
> Of slightest texture, moves with natural grace,
> Like moonbeams gliding through the yielding air."*

Here she reclines in oblivious repose upon a rich embroidered carpet from the most celebrated looms of Persia. Through an atmosphere of the richest incense she breathes the choicest perfumes of Arabia the happy, and has everything around

* Uttara Rama Cheritra, a Hindoo drama, translated by Horace Hayman Wilson, Esq. from the original Sanscrit.

her that can administer to sensual delight; still she is generally an unhappy being. She dwells in the midst of splendid misery and ungratifying profusion, while all within herself is desolation and hopelessness. Her sympathies are either warped or stifled; her heart is blighted and her mind degraded. She cannot join in the enthusiasm of the inimitable Hafiz,*—"The breath of the western gale will soon shed musk around; the old world will again be young;"—but languishes, as the seasons return, in the most debasing captivity, and feels that the western gale breathes not upon her either the freshness of freedom or of joy.†

* Hafiz was a lyric poet, called, by way of pre-eminent distinction, the Anacreon of Persia.

† See Oriental Annual, vol. ii.

CHAPTER V.

The daughter of the Tartar Aiass was a woman of haughty spirit, and could ill brook the indifference with which she was treated by her former admirer. It preyed deeply upon her mind. She was not ignorant of the Emperor's hostility towards her late husband, though unconscious that it had been the cause of his death. She severely felt her bereavement; and the change from perfect freedom to captivity—from the affection of a generous husband to the indifference of a capricious master, deeply mortified her. Meanwhile, however, she was not idle: the resources of her mind were no less fertile than extraordinary.

Being very expert at working tapestry and all kinds of embroidery, and in painting silks with the richest devices, she applied herself with great assiduity to those employments. By intense application, she acquired an expertness which enabled her to transcend the works of the best manufacturers in the empire. In a short time the exquisite productions of her taste and skill became

the talk of the capital, and she immediately became a person of importance, apart from her being the widow of the renowned Shere Afkun. The ladies of the Omrahs of Delhi and Agra would wear nothing upon grand occasions but what came from the hands of the lovely Mher-ul-Nissa; she was consequently soon pronounced the oracle of fashion and of taste.

Whilst she affected an extreme simplicity in her own dress, she attired her attendants in the richest tissues and brocades, making those who had attractive persons the vehicle of setting off to advantage the works of her own industry. She thus amassed a considerable sum of money, and became more celebrated in her obscurity than she had hitherto been as the wife of the most distinguished hero of his age. Her milder glories had been hitherto eclipsed by the predominancy of his.

Notwithstanding the success of her exertions in the occupation to which she had devoted herself, the daughter of Aiass the Tartar was still an unhappy woman. She loathed her captivity; she felt the moral degradation to which she was subjected, and that the influence which she imagined herself born to exercise was extinguished by an untoward destiny. She had always entertained a secret conviction that the strange events of her

birth portended a mortal distinction of singular splendour; it therefore mortified her to find that she continued to live celebrated only as a fabricator of brocades and tissues. Her spirits drooped; she grew peevish and irritable. Her occupation became a toil, and she talked of relinquishing it, when one day she was apprized that there was an old woman in the harem who pretended to look into the future and read the destinies of mankind. Mher-ul-Nissa immediately sent for the prophetess. The crone appeared before her, bending beneath the weight of years. Upon seeing the widow of the late Shere Afkun, she lifted her skinny arms, clasped her bony fingers together, and muttered a few incoherent words which had more the seeming of madness than of prophecy: there was, however, more sanity than madness in the mummery—it was a sort of label to her draught of foreknowledge.

"Well, mother," inquired Mher-ul-Nissa mildly, "what do those strange words portend? I would know something of my destiny, if it is in thy power to read it: if not, take this, and leave a blessing behind thee; for an aged woman's curse is a dreadful thing to hang over any one's head." Saying this, she placed a gold mohur upon the beldam's right palm, who giving a chuckle of

delight, mumbled forth her vaticination with a distorted grin of satisfaction. "You were born in a desert to die upon a throne. She who as a babe was embraced by a reptile, as a woman will be embraced by a king. The infant that was brought into the world amidst famine will go out of it amidst plenty. The star, so puny at thy birth, will expand into a sun. I am not deceived;—believe me, and leave here a proof of your faith." She extended her hand, and having received another golden recompense, retired.

Mher-ul-Nissa was willing to believe the prophecy of the sibyl. There was something in it, in spite of its vague generalities, that harmonized closely with those silent presentiments which she had for some time past permitted herself to cherish. She was ambitious, and a thirst after distinction was her ruling passion. Her mind was too strongly fortified against superstition to render her the dupe of a juggler's predictions; nevertheless, the mere promise of aggrandizement was agreeable to her ear, and she therefore lent a willing attention to what her reason despised, not caring to pay for the indulgence a thousand times above its value. She cherished the promise of worldly exaltation, not because she believed the hag who made it had a further insight into futurity than

her neighbours, but only because the theme was grateful to her sensitive ambition; and there moreover existed a strong presentiment within her, that she should rise from the grovelling condition to which she was now reduced, and be exalted in proportion to her present degradation.

Actuated by this feeling, she did everything in her power to give currency to her reputation. She well knew that her taste was the theme of general approbation, and the marvellous power of her beauty began to be talked of beyond the precincts of the haram. An Omrah of distinction, holding a high office in the state, offered her his hand, and it was soon noised abroad that she was about to become his wife. She secretly encouraged this report, though she had given him no pledge, hoping that it would come to higher ears and procure her an interview with the Emperor.

This state of things could not last long; and when pressed by the impatient noble for a definitive answer to his offer of marriage, to his astonishment and that of all who were acquainted with the circumstance, she declined it. Mortified at his repulse, he determined to obtain by force what was denied to his entreaty, and took an opportu-

nity of violating the sanctity of the harem by appearing before her. She was alone in her apartment when the disappointed lover entered. He commenced by upbraiding her with her caprice, which she bore with dignified patience, until, irritated by her calmness, the Omrah seized her arm and roused her indignation by the most offensive menaces. He being a powerful man, she was as an infant in his grasp; nevertheless, with the impulse of roused passion, she suddenly burst from his embrace, rushed into an inner chamber, and, seizing a crease, commanded the intruder to retire. Maddened by disappointment, he sprang forward to repeat the violence which he had already offered: she instantly raised her arm and buried the dagger in his body. He fell reeking in his blood. He was borne from the apartment insensible; and a confinement of three months to his bed, under the daily peril of death, taught him a lesson never to pass from memory but with his life. Other suitors sought the hand of the Tartar's daughter, but all with like success.

The accomplishments of this singular woman were soon carried to the ears of the Emperor, who had probably by this time forgotten the ascendency which she once held over his heart; or per-

haps it was that the mortification of her having been the wife of another rendered him sullen in his determination not to see her. He resolved, however, now to visit her, in order to have ocular proof whether the voice of public report were a truth or an exaggeration. In order to take her by surprise, he unexpectedly entered her apartment. At the sight of her unrivalled beauty, all his former passion revived in an instant. She was reclining on a sofa in an undress robe of plain white muslin, which exhibited her faultless shape to the best advantage, and became her better than the richest brocades of Bagdat, or the finest embroideries of Cashmere. As soon as the Emperor entered, the siren rose with an agitation that served only to heighten her charms, and fixed her eyes upon the ground with well-dissembled confusion. Jehangire stood mute with amazement, and rapture took immediate possession of his soul: he felt, if he did not utter, the sentiment of an eminent poet of his own religion:—

> "Sweet maid, if thou wouldst charm my sight,
> And bid these arms thy neck infold;
> That rosy cheek, that lily hand,
> Would give thy lover more delight
> Than all Bocara's vaunted gold,
> Than all the gems of Sarmacand."

He was dazzled by the perfection of her form, the dignity of her mien, and the transcendent loveliness of her features. Advancing to where she stood with downcast eyes and suffused cheeks, blushing in the dazzling plenitude of her beauty, he took her hand and said: "Sun of women, the Emperor of a great and mighty nation throws himself at thy feet as an act of just homage to thy beauty. Wilt thou be the Sultana of Jehangire the predominant?"

"A subject has no voice," replied the enchantress; "and a woman especially can have no will but that of her sovereign: it is his privilege to command—her heritage is to obey."

Jehangire again took her hand, declared his resolution to make her his Empress, and immediately a proclamation was issued for the celebration of the royal nuptials with the lovely relict of the late Shere Afkun.

A general festival was observed throughout the empire. Those rich embroideries which had lately been the admiration of the ladies of Delhi no longer issued from the harem. The humble embroidress cast aside the distaff for the crown, and in the issue proved to be one of the most extraordinary women which the pen of history has cele-

brated. She became the principal director of the complex machine of government. The name of Mher-ul-Nissa was exchanged for that of Noor Mahil, "The Light of the Harem."

From this moment she was acknowledged as the favourite wife of the Emperor of the Moguls. In the climax of her exaltation her name was again changed to Noor Jehan, or, "The Light of the World." As a distinguishing mark of her pre-eminence in the sovereign's affections, she was allowed to assume the title of Shahe, or Empress. Her family was held next in rank to the princes of the blood, and advanced to places of the highest trust. Its members were admitted to privileges which had never before been enjoyed by subjects under the Mogul domination. The current coin of the realm was stamped with her name, as well as with that of the sovereign! She converted the harem into a court, where the mysteries of state policy were discussed with a freedom and a power seldom known under despotic governments.

It was from the harem that those celebrated decrees were fulminated—for though they passed in the Emperor's name, it is credibly attested that they emanated from his Sultana—which rendered the reign of Jehangire one of the most politically

prosperous in the annals of Mahomedan history. Her influence exceeded that of any other person in the empire, not even excepting the sovereign; and perhaps, under the rigid scrupulosity of Mogul policy with regard to women sharing in the administration of the state, there never has been an instance of one of the sex attaining an ascendency so paramount, and such perfect political control over the destinies of so many subject principalities, as the renowned Noor Jehan.

CHAPTER VI.

A FEW years after the elevation of this extraordinary woman, Churrum, the third son of Jehangire, who afterwards ascended the imperial throne under the assumed designation of Shah Jehan, began to interrupt the harmony of the state. He had been sent with a powerful army into the Deccan to quell a formidable confederacy against the reigning authority, and having succeeded in reducing the insurgents to obedience, began to show his ambitious designs upon the crown. Under the most plausible pretences, and while in command of the army with which he had just quelled a dangerous insurrection, he persuaded the Emperor to put into his hands Chusero, Jehangire's eldest son, and consequently heir to the throne, who had been imprisoned for rebellion. It soon became evident why he had been so urgent to obtain the person of his rebellious brother. Chusero was the grand obstacle between him and the crown. The traitor Churrum now shortly threw off the mask, and

publicly declared his designs. His success in the Deccan had endeared him to the troops; his courage had gained their confidence, and his liberality secured their affections. Confiding in his imagined power, he disregarded the mandates of his father, continued in arms, and commanding his unhappy brother to be murdered under the walls of Azere, immediately assumed the imperial titles.

The Sultana had long suspected the intentions of Churrum. In spite of the veil which he had thrown over his base designs, they did not escape her penetration. Ambition was the dominant feeling in the bosom of this crafty prince. The Empress, seeing the evils likely to accrue from this fierce passion if suffered to operate unchecked, determined to take precautions to contravene his measures. Before the death of Chusero she saw that the unnatural brother, into whose power he had fallen, had a design upon the throne. Every action of his public life had shown a secret but undeviating perseverance in the pursuit of dominion, not to be mistaken. His cunning she felt might be overreached, but his talents were formidable. He was not only a crafty intriguer, but a brave and successful general. He had become the idol of the army; and with such a mighty engine to power,

she dreaded the final success of his schemes. She declared her suspicions to the Emperor, who was at first unwilling to entertain them; but the wife had such an influence over the mind of her royal husband, that he always listened with great confidence to her suggestions. She assured him that Churrum must be watched, advised his recall, and that the army should be placed under a less dangerous command. She insisted upon speedy and decisive measures, in order to obviate danger to the state. To the Emperor's doubts of Churrum's ambitious intentions she answered:

"A man does not seek the instruments of authority but to employ them. When princes lay themselves out for popularity they intend to make the mob their tools, and the citizens their stepping-stones to dominion. He who has once deceived is never to be trusted; and I can too well discover that, under the smiles of allegiance which so frequently play upon the features of Prince Churrum in his father's presence, hypocrisy lurks like the serpent in a bed of flowers."

After a while Jehangire was convinced by the arguments of the Sultana of his son's evil designs, which an account of Chusero's death soon confirmed. He was enraged at such a sanguinary act

of ambition, and determined to punish the fratricide. In order to obviate the stigma which he knew would be attached to the crime of murdering a brother, the crafty prince affected such extreme grief, that he was believed by many to be innocent of so atrocious an offence. Jehangire, however, or rather his Empress, was not to be deceived by this bare-faced hypocrisy: the former wrote him a letter, accusing him of the crime; at the same time ordering the body of his murdered son to be disinterred, it was brought to the capital, and buried with the honours due to his rank.

Although Prince Churrum was married to a niece of Noor Jehan, the hostility between him and the Empress had risen to such a height that it was perfectly implacable. The rebellious prince well knew that he owed the indignation of his parent to her influence; he therefore resolved to lose no time in endeavouring to get her into his power. Seeing no probability of a reconciliation with his father, he determined to continue in his rebellion.

At the suggestion of his consort, Jehangire prepared to reduce his son to obedience; but his troops being at a distance, he could not bring an army into the field. At this critical juncture, a courier arrived from Mohabet Chan, the im-

perial general, stating that he was advancing, with all the forces of the Punjab, to join the royal army. Shortly after, the troops of Jehangire engaged the rebels and entirely defeated them. The refractory prince was so overcome by this unexpected reverse of fortune, that he meditated suicide. The paroxysm, however, passed, and he fled to the mountains of Mewat, where he found for the moment a secure refuge from the anger of his father and the hostility of Noor Jehan. Misfortune followed him:—his party was defeated in Guzerat. Still the royal rebel was so formidable, that it was resolved to take him alive, as the only means of extinguishing the flames of civil war, always disastrous to the victors as well as to the vanquished. Mohabet Chan was therefore despatched, at the head of a large detachment of Rajpoots, a race of soldiers proverbially brave, to capture the royal insurgent. Churrum, in consequence, quitted his retreat, determined to face the danger and try the chance of another battle. Crossing the river Nerbuddah, in the province of Malwa, he threw up works to defend the ford. Of the large and well-appointed army which had followed him into the Deccan there remained only a small dispirited

remnant, and desertions were daily thinning his lines. He had no reliance upon the soldiers, dejected from successive defeats, and murmuring for their arrears of pay, which he was unable to provide. He lost his energy, became incautious and irresolute, and allowed himself to be surprised by the imperial general, who routed his disheartened forces with great slaughter, and forced him again to seek refuge in the hills. He soon, however, passed through Golconda, and took the route to Bengal.

His escape was a source of severe mortification to the Sultana, who foresaw that the repose of the state was not likely to be secured until he should either be taken or destroyed. She was, besides, anxious that the succession should be fixed upon Shariar, the fourth son of Jehangire, who had married the daughter whom she had borne to Shere Afkun. By her representations, no doubt in the main just, the Emperor's enmity towards his son was kept alive; of which the latter being aware, saw that it would not be prudent to trust himself within the walls of his father's capital. He had more than once thought of throwing himself upon the paternal clemency; but his knowledge of the Sultana's vindictive

spirit, and the consciousness of his own manifold derelictions, kept him from running the risk of captivity for life, if not of undergoing extreme punishment.

His affairs, however, now began to assume a more favourable aspect. Having invested the fort of Tellia Gurri, in Bengal, with a new army which he had raised in that province, after an obstinate defence by the garrison he succeeded in carrying the place by storm. This unexpected success animated him to new exertions. He now overran the whole district, which shortly submitted to his arms. He reduced Dacca, a considerable city, and once the capital of Bengal, in which he found an immense treasure in gold and silver, besides jewels and warlike stores. The Suba was deposed, and a new governor raised, who ruled in the name of Shah Jehan, by which title Prince Churrum finally ascended the imperial throne.

No sooner had he settled the government of Bengal, than he turned his thoughts to the neighbouring province of Bahar. The governor fled at his approach; but the wealthy Zemindars crowded to his camp to offer him their allegiance. He accepted their submission, together with the rich presents which they brought to ratify the

mutual compact of protection and affiance, and to confirm their sincerity. But the most important occurrence, and which greatly tended to strengthen him in his new conquests, was the unexpected submission of Mubarick, governor of the fort of Rhotas, who came to his camp, presented him the keys, and made a vow of perpetual fealty. This fortress was considered impregnable. It had never been taken by force, and was therefore looked upon by the rebellious prince as a place of security for his family. Here he immediately removed them; and being now relieved from immediate anxiety on their account, he was better prepared to encounter the dangers of the field, and to brave the vicissitudes of fortune.

This uninterrupted current of success inflamed the pride of the royal rebel, and he fancied himself in a condition to contend for the imperial sceptre with that army which had already twice so signally defeated him. Mohabet Chan had again taken the field, and marched as far as Benares, on the banks of the Ganges, to chastise the insurgents, who mustered upwards of forty thousand horse,—a force scarcely inferior to the imperialists in number,—and were drawn up on the bank of a small stream.

The battle was desperate, but decisive. The rebels were routed after a prodigious slaughter. The conduct of Prince Churrum on this occasion was marked by reckless bravery. Plunging into the thickest of the fight with five hundred horse, who had resolved to devote themselves to death with their leader, he maintained a sanguinary struggle against immense odds, and would, no doubt, have fallen a victim to his despair, had not some of his officers seized the reins of his charger, and forced him from the battle to a place of security. He fled to the fort of Rhotas, where he had left his family. The plunder of his camp, which contained the spoils of Dacca, saved him from immediate pursuit.

Leaving his family in the fortress, where he imagined they would be secure, the wretched prince collected the scattered remains of his army, and threw himself into Patna, which he determined to defend, but thought it prudent to evacuate the city at the approach of his enemies. He fled through Bengal towards the Deccan. The provinces which he had so lately conquered fell again under the legitimate authority. When Mohabet had settled the government of these districts, he marched after the royal fugitive.

Though his fortunes were reduced to so low an ebb, the prince did not despond. His mind was active, and these severe reverses only seemed to animate him to new enterprises. He attached to his desperate fortunes the Rajah of Ambere, who entertained some cause of enmity towards Jehangire. Strengthened by the forces of this new ally, he reduced the city of Boorhampoor; when the imperial army arriving, forced him to raise the siege and take shelter in the mountains of Ballagat. In his retreat he made an attempt upon a strong fortress on the frontiers of Kandeish, where he was repulsed with considerable loss.

This completed his ruin. His nobles no longer followed him; and the troops, under the sanction of their example, deserted his standard. A thousand horse only remained. "His spirits sank within him; his misfortunes oppressed him, his guilt and folly were always present to his mind. Sickness was added to his other miseries. He was hunted like a wild beast from place to place; all mankind were his enemies—he was their foe. Where he thought he could not overcome, he fled; he spread devastation through places where he could prevail. He was, however, tired of rapine. Worn

down by contention and hostility, he wrote letters of compunction to his father: he enlarged on his own guilt,—he even added, if possible, to his own wretchedness and misfortune. Jehangire was often full of affection—he was always weak: he was shocked at the miserable condition of a son whom he had once loved; his tears fell upon the part of that son's letter which mentioned guilt, and his crimes vanished from memory.

"In the midst of this returning softness, Jehangire was not altogether void of policy. He wrote to his son, that if he would give orders to the governors of Rhotas, of Azere, and other places which were still held out in his name, to deliver up their forts, and send his three sons, Dara, Aurungzebe, and Murad, to court, he would be forgiven for his past crimes. Churrum embraced the offer with joy; he delivered up the forts and sent his children to Agra. He, however, found various pretences for not appearing in person at court. He alleged that he was ashamed to see a father whom he had so much injured; but he was actually afraid of the machinations of the Sultana. He made excursions, under a pretence of pleasure, through all

parts of the empire, attended by five hundred horse. He was sometimes heard of at Ajmere, sometimes at Tatta on the Indus, and again in the Deccan."* Such was the termination of this formidable rebellion, the suppression of which Jehangire entirely owed to the vigilance and foresight of his Empress, Noor Jehan. This remarkable woman was ever conspicuous amid the great stir of the times; and in every action of her life she displayed that predominancy of mind which had distinguished her even before her exaltation to the imperial sceptre, which she may be said to have wielded,—for though it appeared in the hand of her husband, she gave strength to the grasp by which he held it, and imparted stability to his throne.

* Vide Dow. *ad loc.*

CHAPTER VII.

Among the extraordinary occurrences of Noor Jehan's life, perhaps there is none that more forcibly developes her character than her bearing towards Mohabet Chan, after the signal services which he had rendered the state by suppressing the rebellion of Prince Churrum. The eminent abilities displayed by Mohabet during his command of the imperial armies had won for him the confidence of his master and of the Empress; and this confidence was increased by his suppression of the most formidable rebellion which disturbed the reign of Jehangire. His family was raised to offices of trust in the state, and the Emperor treated him with a distinction that excited the envy of the nobles. But the gratitude of princes has ever been a questionable virtue; their suspicions are readily excited, and there are never wanting engines to set those suspicions at work.

The Sultana soon became apprehensive of Mo-

habet's influence with the Emperor; and therefore, to abridge it, put in operation the active energies of her mind. Jehangire was naturally a credulous man, and the rebellion of his son had rendered him suspicious. The virtues of his general ought to have placed him above the petty surmises suggested by envy; but his abilities had raised him enemies at court, and his master wanted firmness to repel the insinuations levelled against a man who had been the main prop of his throne. Mohabet soon perceived a change in his sovereign's feelings; but, conscious of his own integrity, he was at no pains to remove the prejudices excited against him. He was conscious that he owed much of the growing coldness evident in the Emperor's manner towards him to the misrepresentations of Noor Jehan; and thence grew a strong and mutual antipathy, which had nearly proved the means of transferring the empire from the house of Timur to another dynasty.

The immediate cause of that open rupture which ensued, and had nearly cost Jehangire his crown, was an accusation made to the Sultana by a noble that Mohabet had sanctioned his son's death, which the father expressed himself deter-

mined to avenge. He further stated that the general entertained a design of raising his sovereign's second son to the throne. This was reported to the Emperor: it immediately excited his fears, and he listened with weak credulity to a charge of treason against his general. Blinded by his terrors, he forgot the services which that great and good man had rendered to the state, and weakly listened to the voice of his slanderers.

Mohabet, who was at this time in Bengal, received his master's imperative orders to repair immediately to the capital. As he did not instantly obey, he received a second summons, still more peremptory, accompanied with such manifestations of displeasure, that he could no longer mistake the danger of his situation. Although surprised at this total change of good feeling towards him, yet having really done nothing justly to excite his sovereign's displeasure, he resolved to obey the mandate at all hazards, but to take every necessary precaution against his enemies, whether secret or open. When, however, he reflected upon the unworthy requital he had received for his services, indignation and disgust overbore his first resolution, and he came to the determination of retiring to a castle of which he had some time be-

fore been appointed governor; but, to his astonishment, he found that an order had been received at the fortress to deliver it up to a person whom the Sultana had appointed to take immediate possession. This unjustifiable act of tyranny convinced him of what some of his friends at court had already apprised him, that his life was in danger from the secret machinations of his foes; he determined therefore not to put himself in their power before he had at least made some effort to ascertain the extent of his peril.

He wrote to the Emperor, expressing surprise at his hostility towards an unoffending subject, and declaring that, though he had the greatest confidence in the honour of his sovereign, he had none in that of his evil counsellors. The only reply which he received to this temperate expostulation was an order, still more peremptory than those already sent, to appear at court without further delay. To refuse was to rebel; he therefore addressed another letter to his imperial master. In it he said, "I will serve my sovereign with my life against his enemies; but I will not expose it to the malice of his friends. Assure me of safety, and I will clear myself in your presence."

This letter was construed by the Sultana, who directed all the Emperor's measures, into an indignity. Jehangire was angry, and despatched a messenger, summoning Mohabet, in very reproachful terms, to appear before him. The general prepared to obey; but took the precaution of going with an escort of five thousand Rajpoots in the imperial pay, who had long served under him, and were devoted to their commander. With this guard of faithful soldiers he proceeded towards Lahore, where the sovereign at that time held his court.

When the Empress heard that Mohabet was advancing with so numerous an escort, she became alarmed. She feared that such a formidable force might either terrify the Emperor into a reconciliation, or place his crown in jeopardy. Either way there was cause for apprehension. She persuaded him, therefore, not to admit the refractory general into the camp, for at this time the imperial retinue was on its way from Lahore to Cabul. When he arrived near the royal encampment, a messenger was despatched to inform him that he would not be allowed to enter the presence of his sovereign until he had accounted for the revenues of Bengal, and the plunder taken at the battle of Benares.

Provoked at such a demand, the general despatched his son-in-law to complain of the indignity; but no sooner had the young man entered the Emperor's presence, than he was stripped, bastinadoed, covered with a ragged robe, placed upon a lean tattoo* with his face towards the tail, and thus sent back to his father-in-law amid the jeers of the whole army. This was an insult not to be forgiven. Mohabet was grieved at the Emperor's weakness, but attributed the scandal of the late scene to the Sultana, to whose intrigues he imputed her royal husband's violent hostility. He saw that to put himself in her power was at once to relinquish his liberty, if not his life; and he accordingly formed his resolution. It was no less decisive than bold. He resolved immediately to surprise the sovereign and carry him off.

The imperial army lay encamped on the banks of a river, across which was a bridge. On the morning after the maltreatment of Mohabet's messenger, they proceeded on their march. Not being in an enemy's country, no precautions were used against surprise, as no danger was apprehended. The army commenced its march early in the morning; and Jehangire, being in no haste to move,

* A native pony.

continued in his tent, intending to follow at his convenience. When the imperial troops had crossed the bridge, Mohabet advancing with his Rajpoots, set it on fire, and thus cut off the sovereign's retreat. He then rushed forward to the royal tent. His face was pale, but his whole aspect severe and resolute: there was no mistaking the purpose which was legibly written in every feature. He was followed by his brave Rajpoots. Resistance was vain. The guards and nobles were instantly disarmed.

Jehangire had retired to the bath, whither Mohabet followed him. The guards attempted to oppose the latter's entrance; but putting his hand upon his sword, and pointing to his numerous followers, no further opposition was made, and the bold general entered the bathing-tent. The Omrahs present, seeing the folly of resistance, relinquished their arms and became silent spectators of the scene. Mohabet passed them with a stern countenance, which brought to their memories the outrage of the preceding day, but did not utter a word.

Meanwhile information of what had happened was carried to the inner tent, where the Emperor was, by some of the female attendants. He seized his

sword, but was soon brought to a sense of his defenceless position. Perceiving that all his guards and nobles were disarmed, and that Mohabet was accompanied by a band of resolute followers prepared to obey his commands to the very letter, he approached the general, whom his conscience now told him he had treated with signal ingratitude, and said, "What does this mean, Mohabet Chan?" Mohabet, touching the ground, and then his forehead, thus replied:

"Forced by the machinations of my enemies, who plot against my life, I throw myself under the protection of my sovereign."

"You are safe," answered the Emperor; "but what would these who stand armed behind you?"

"They demand full security," rejoined Mohabet, "for me and my family; and without it they will not retire."

"I understand you," said Jehangire: "name your terms, and they shall be granted. But you do me an injustice, Mohabet: I did not plot against your life; I knew your services, though I was offended at your seeming disobedience of my commands. Be assured of my protection: I shall forget the conduct which necessity has imposed upon you."

Mohabet did not reply; but, ordering a horse, requested the Emperor to mount. They then rode forward, surrounded by Rajpoots. When they had proceeded beyond the skirts of the camp, the imperial captive was respectfully requested to place himself upon an elephant, in order to avoid accident in any confusion that might ensue from his departure. He readily complied with the general's request, seeing that opposition would be fruitless; and ascended the elephant, upon which three Rajpoots immediately placed themselves as guards. Some of the nobles, seeing the captivity of their sovereign, advanced to oppose his progress, and were instantly cut down by the followers of Mohabet. There was no further interruption offered; and Jehangire was taken to Mohabet's tent. Here the latter explained himself to his royal prisoner, assuring him that he had no design either against his life or his power. "But," he continued, sternly, "I am determined to be secure from treachery."

Mohabet was greatly disappointed that he had not been able to secure the Sultana. During the confusion caused by the entrance of his numerous followers into the imperial tent, she had contrived to escape, and, passing the stream upon her ele-

phant, had joined the army, to whom she communicated the disaster of her husband's captivity.

Mohabet, not considering himself secure while the Sultana was at large, determined to leave nothing unattempted to get her into his power. He had now publicly shown his hostility: the banner of rebellion was raised, and no alternative remained but to pursue his purpose with the same resolute boldness with which he had begun it. He was conscious of the resources of his own genius. He was the idol of the troops which he commanded; and though aware of the consummate abilities of the Sultana — who in fact directed the movements of the imperial army—and of her brother the Vizier, still he knew they were not popular with the troops, and that, moreover, a great number of the Omrahs were dissatisfied with the influence exercised by her and her family.

Mohabet having returned with the Emperor to his former camp on the banks of the river, found that Sujait Chan, an Omrah of high reputation, had just arrived to join the imperial army. Finding the camp deserted, and the Emperor a prisoner in the hands of his rebellious general, Sujait upbraided the latter with treachery in the presence

of his Rajpoots. The general, at once enraged and alarmed, ordered his troops to fall upon the haughty noble, whom they immediately slew, together with his whole retinue. This decisive stroke of severity at once terrified the other nobles, who had been watching for an opportunity of rescuing their sovereign; and they fled across the river, carrying to the imperial army the melancholy intelligence of Sujait's death.

This information produced a general gloom. The captivity of the Emperor excited the indignation of the Sultana, and of Asiph the Vizier. Noor Jehan summoned the nobles who had just joined the army, and upbraided them with their cowardice in not hazarding their lives in defence of their royal master. A council was promptly summoned, and a consultation held as to the best method to be pursued for rescuing the sovereign out of his enemy's hands. There was no time to be lost: the moment was critical; delay only diminished the chances of success, as it strengthened the power of the rebel, who was universally popular. It was determined to recross the river with the dawn, and attack Mohabet. Jehangire, whom they had contrived to apprize of this intention, began to fear for his

life. He instantly sent a messenger to the Vizier to desist; but that minister not considering himself bound to comply with the commands of a captive monarch, determined to persevere in his intention.

CHAPTER VIII.

At daybreak the Vizier retraced his steps with the army. Upon reaching the bridge, finding that it had been burned down, he instantly came to the determination of fording the river; but the water was very deep, and in this attempt many were drowned. The banks on the opposite side were so steep, that those who gained them had to contend with an enemy under great disadvantage. The enemy, too, were vigilant and active, and cut them off as fast as they quitted the water. Nothing could withstand the headlong valour of the Rajpoots. Not a man escaped; the moment he gained the bank, he was slain in attempting to ascend it. The imperial army, however, was numerous, and the rear pressing upon the front, many at length made good their footing; but it was to encounter foes whose principle of warfare was to vanquish or to die. The action continued for several hours, and the slaughter of the imperial forces was prodigious. The Vi-

zier did all in his power to encourage the troops, to no purpose—they were dispirited; but still, trusting to their numbers, they continued the struggle under the greatest disadvantages.

Noor Jehan witnessed the whole scene from the river-bank, and her alarm was excessive at beholding the slaughter of the royal forces. Her resolute spirit was roused, and her determination instantly taken. Mounted upon an elephant,—on which was likewise her daughter, a beautiful maiden, in the prime and freshness of youth,—armed with a bow and arrows, she plunged fearlessly into the stream The Empress was followed by several nobles, who, ashamed at beholding the resolution of a woman, followed her into the river, and made for the further side. Urging her elephant to the middle of the channel, she waved a scarf to encourage the Vizier's troops. Undaunted at the carnage before her, she stood in the howdah, and discharged her arrows with fatal aim at the foe. Three Mahoots were successively killed; yet she maintained her position, and having exhausted her quiver, demanded another to be brought. Her elephant was three times wounded, and her situation became extremely dangerous from the violent plunges of the animal under

the excitement of suffering. Still she continued to discharge her arrows with fearless determination. Her daughter was at length wounded in the arm, which only stimulated the heroic mother to greater exertions. She urged her elephant forward to the bank, soon exhausted another quiver of arrows, and called for a fresh supply. The sight of her heroism gave an impulse to the wavering courage of her brother's troops, and many effected their landing.

The battle now became sanguinary in the extreme; but the imperialists gained no ground. In spite of the Sultana's presence, they could not overcome the determined resistance of the Rajpoots, nevertheless, they fought with a bravery worthy of better success. Noor Jehan, having urged her elephant close to the bank, a Rajpoot gave it a severe wound with his sword, just at the root of the trunk. With a shrill cry the huge animal fell; but whilst it was in the act of falling, the Sultana had placed an arrow in the string of her bow, and fixed it in the brain of her foe, who rolled dead upon the plain. When the elephant fell, both mother and daughter were thrown into the stream, and, as the current was rapid, their lives were in jeopardy; but the Empress, seizing her bow with

her teeth, swam towards some Omrahs, who were crossing to second her heroic exertions. Her daughter was delivered from peril by the enemy and made prisoner. Meanwhile, the mother breasted the current, and with difficulty reached an elephant, upon which a noble was seated, who rescued her from the river. Whilst she was in the water, a ball from a matchlock struck her in the side; but it passed round by the rib, and thus did not enter her body.

Undismayed by the danger she had just escaped, the Empress continued to discharge her arrows at the enemy, doing considerable execution with her single arm. Mohabet was the chief object of her aim; but he was too far from the bank to enable her to accomplish her fatal purpose. Her danger was becoming every moment more imminent; she nevertheless urged her elephant forward, reckless of personal consequences. She had already exhausted three quivers of arrows, when a fourth was brought to her. At the first discharge she struck a soldier in the body, who instantly tore out the shaft from his flesh, and with a fierce resolution of revenge leaped into the stream. He held his sword above the water with one hand, and dashed with the other toward the Sultana's ele-

phant. Already was his arm raised to strike; but before he could accomplish his purpose, another arrow from the heroine's bow was buried in his breast, and he sank beneath the whirling eddies.

A number of Rajpoots now rushed into the river to seize the Sultana. They soon surrounded her; but she plied her bow so vigorously, that several of them were wounded. They were, however, about to make good their capture — the glory of the Moguls was in jeopardy. A Rajpoot had ascended the back of her elephant, and commenced a fierce struggle with the Omrah who accompanied his mistress. At this moment, the huge animal having received a severe wound behind, sprang suddenly forward, making its way through the soldiers by whom it had been surrounded, and scrambled up the bank. It was immediately despatched. As it fell, Noor Jehan leaped from the howdah, and with a voice of stern command summoned some of the imperial troops, who were engaged in a desperate conflict with the enemy, to her rescue. They obeyed a voice which they had long been taught to consider as that of their sovereign. She was soon surrounded by friends and foes. Seizing a sword, she fought with a heroism that astonished even the Rajpoots, with whom valour is

a heritage. A deep sabre-cut in the shoulder seemed only to add a stimulus to her resolution. The man who had inflicted the wound received from her arm a signal retribution: she dashed her sword into his skull, and he was instantly prostrated among the dead.

The battle now raged with prodigious fury; but the imperialists were fast giving way. At length the Sultana was left fighting with unabated energy, supported by only a few soldiers. The moment was critical. Two Rajpoots advanced to seize her; she saw there was not an instant to be lost, and rushing to the river's bank, turned her head upon her foes with a haughty expression of defiance, and leaped undauntedly into the torrent. The two soldiers followed, resolved to make her their prisoner or die in the attempt. In spite of her wound, with a resolution which nothing could subdue, she bore up against the rapid current; but, notwithstanding all her exertions, was carried by its force down the stream. As the soldiers were more encumbered, the body of each being protected by a thick quilted tunic, the royal fugitive gained considerably upon them. That portion of the imperial army which had not yet crossed the river, watched her with intense anxiety. She rose buoyantly

above the waters, and, after great exertions, landed upon the opposite bank. Her pursuers were by this time close upon her. Determined not to be made a prisoner, she prepared for a desperate resistance.

One of the Rajpoots being before the other, first gained the shore. The bank was steep: just as he reached the brink, his foot slipped, and he partially fell, but clung to the roots of some wild shrubs that protruded from the earth. The opportunity was not to be lost; Noor Jehan drew a dagger from her girdle, and as the soldier was struggling to regain his footing, struck him with all her force upon the temple: his body being protected by the quilted tunic, his face was the only part that she could successfully strike. The blow was dealt with fatal aim; it divided the temporal artery, and the man fell back into the water, deluged in his blood. His companion, who had been carried farther down the stream, gained the bank during this fatal struggle. Overcome by the extraordinary heroism of the Sultana, he approached her with a profound salaam, and said, "Lady, your heroic bearing deserves a better meed than captivity. You are now within my power; but, astonished at the matchless valour you have displayed, I cannot persuade myself to make you prisoner.

Promise me a safe conduct back to the army to which I belong, and you are free; refuse me, and I will plunge immediately with you into the stream, where we will both perish together."

"Soldier," replied the Sultana with composed dignity, "I accept your terms. I promise you a safe conduct to your friends. Your behaviour is noble, and claims my esteem: what boon can I offer you?"

"A Rajpoot never accepts a boon from a foe. Besides, I have no claim upon your generosity. I do not spare you because you are Empress of the Moguls, but because I admire the valour which you have exhibited as a woman. With women it is a rare quality, and deserves its reward. I should have felt the same towards a Pariah who had displayed as much."

Noor Jehan was received by her friends with shouts of joy; and the soldier who accompanied her was conducted to a ford some distance up the river, where he passed over to the army of Mohabet.

Seeing their Empress safe, two Omrahs, with their followers, crossed the stream and joined the imperialists, who were now giving way on all sides. Encouraged by this fresh accession of force, the retreating party again rallied, and the

contest was maintained with renewed vigour. The Rajpoots were in their turn repulsed. They retreated towards the tent in which the Emperor was confined. Several arrows and balls piercing through the canvass and exposing Jehangire's life to great danger, he was covered with a shield by an officer of the guard. Meanwhile Mohabet rallied his troops behind the tents and turned them upon the flank of the imperialists, who, dispirited by this fresh assault, gave way, and a general rout followed. Mohabet, after a hard contest, remained master of the field, which was literally covered with the slain.

The Vizier, seeing that all was lost, fled from the scene of carnage, and reaching the castle of New Rhotas, shut himself up there with five hundred men. The castle was strong, but offered a retreat of very equivocal security against an army flushed with recent conquest, and commanded by the greatest general of his time. Noor Jehan escaped to Lahore; yet her safety was anything but certain, being without troops, and all the bravest Omrahs of the imperial army either slain or in captivity. Nevertheless she bore her reverse with that indomitable resolution so natural to her lofty and energetic spirit.

Mohabet despatched a messenger to the Vizier with assurances of safety; but the latter declined putting himself in the power of a successful rebel; upon which the incensed general sent his son with a strong detachment to invest the fort of Rhotas. He almost immediately joined this officer with his whole army, and after a feeble resistance the Vizier surrendered at discretion. He was, however, treated with great urbanity and kindness by the conqueror, which not only conciliated his good opinion, but won his friendship.

Meanwhile the Emperor forwarded a letter to his royal consort, begging her to join him, speaking in high terms of the respectful treatment he received from Mohabet, and giving her assurances of a kind reception; urging her at the same time to forget past causes of animosity, and lay aside all thoughts of further hostilities, that the empire might not be involved in the horrors of a civil war. He besought her to follow him to Cabul, whither he was then proceeding; declaring that there was no restraint put upon his actions, but that he was allowed to direct his march wherever he thought proper.

Noor Jehan, seeing at a glance the desperate condition of things, determined to comply at once

with the Emperor's commands, being satisfied that there was more danger in resistance. She therefore came to the resolution of choosing the least of two evils, and, setting out from Lahore, joined her captive husband on his march towards Cabul. Mohabet sent a strong detachment to meet and pay her the honours due to her rank; but she was not to be deceived by so flimsy an artifice. It was evident to her that she was surrounded by her future guards; nevertheless she affected to receive the ostensible compliment, and met the Emperor with a cheerful countenance.

She was immediately subjected to a rigorous confinement. Her tent was surrounded by troops, and she was not permitted to stir abroad. Mohabet accused her of treason against the state, and insisted that so dangerous a criminal should be instantly put to death. "You who are Emperor of the Moguls," said he to Jehangire, "and whom we look upon as something more than human, ought to follow the example of God, who has no respect for persons."

CHAPTER IX.

MOHABET, feeling that his future safety depended upon the death of Noor Jehan, had sent a soldier to despatch her. The minister of destruction entered her tent after midnight, when she was plunged in profound repose. Her beautiful limbs were stretched upon a Persian carpet, the rich colours of which glowed in the light of a lamp that burned upon a silver frame near her bed. Her fine features were relaxed into that placid expression which sleep casts over the countenance when no disquieting dreams disturb and excite it into muscular activity. The slow and measured breath came from her lovely bosom like incense from a sacred censer. Her right arm, naked to the shoulder, and on which the scar of the wound she had lately received appeared still red and tender, was thrown across her bosom, showing an exquisite roundness of surface and delicacy of outline that fixed the attention of the rugged soldier, who hesitated to remove so beautiful a barrier to

that bosom which his dagger was commissioned to reach. He stood over his victim in mute astonishment. He was entranced by her beauty. The recollection of her undaunted heroism disarmed his purpose, and he dropped the weapon of death. Noor Jehan was roused by the noise;—she started from her slumber. Seeing a man in the tent, she sprang from her couch, and, eyeing him with calm disdain, said,

"I apprehend your purpose; you are a murderer; —Noor Jehan is not unprepared to die even by the assassin's dagger. Strike!" she said sternly, and bared her bosom.

The man was overcome; he prostrated himself before her, pointed to the fallen weapon, and besought her to forgive the evil purpose with which he had entered her tent:

"I am but an humble instrument of another's will."

"Go," replied the Sultana with dignity, "and tell your employer that your mistress and his knows how to meet death when it comes, but claims from him the justice awarded to the meanest criminal. The secret dagger is the instrument of tyranny, not of justice. I am in his power; but let him exercise that power as becomes a brave and a good man."

Mohabet was not surprised, though greatly mortified, when he found that his purpose had been thus defeated. He therefore sought the Emperor, and insisted that he should immediately sign a warrant for the death of his Sultana. Jehangire knew too well the justice of the demand, the wrongs which she had heaped upon the man who made it, and his own incapability of resistance, to disobey. Not having seen the Empress for some time, he had in a degree forgotten the influence of her charms; and prepared, though with reluctance, to comply with the sanguinary requisition. When the awful announcement was made to the Sultana, she did not exhibit the slightest emotion. "Imprisoned sovereigns," she said, "lose their right of life with their freedom; but permit me once more to see the Emperor, and to bathe with my tears the hand that has fixed the seal to the warrant of my death." She was well aware of the influence she still possessed over the uxorious Emperor; and, her request being complied with, she attired herself in a plain white dress, with the simplest drapery, which showed her still lovely figure to the greatest advantage, and was thus brought before Jehangire in the presence of Mohabet. There was an expression of subdued sorrow upon her countenance, which seemed only

to enhance the lustre of her beauty. She advanced with a stately step, but did not utter a word; and, bending before her royal husband, took his hand and pressed it to her bosom with a silent but solemn appeal. Jehangire was deeply moved. He burst into tears, and raising the object of his long and ardent attachment, turned to Mohabet, and said in a tone of tremulous earnestness, "Will you not spare this woman?" Mohabet, subdued by the scene, and feeling for his sovereign's distress, replied,

"The Emperor of the Moguls should never ask in vain."

Waving his hand to the guards, they instantly retired, and the Sultana was restored to liberty. She, however, never forgot the wrong, and determined to avenge it. She manifested no signs of hostility, but always met the general with a cheerful countenance and a courteous air, by which she completely lulled his suspicions. Secure in the general estimation of the troops, and especially of his faithful Rajpoots, he felt no fears for his own personal safety; and having completely won the good opinion of Jehangire by his late act of generous forbearance towards Noor Jehan, he had little apprehension from the intrigues of the latter, how-

ever she might choose to employ them. He, however, knew not the person of whom he judged so lightly. Her aims were not to be defeated but by the loss of liberty. She never lost sight of her purpose save in its accomplishment. Nothing could reconcile her to the degradation which she had been lately made to endure. Her daughter indeed had been restored to her; but she likewise had been deprived of freedom, and treated with the indignity of a prisoner. The wound of the latter, which was slight, had soon healed; yet the mother felt that she had received a double wrong in the captivity of herself and child. She employed her time in devising schemes of vengeance; but for six months she plotted so secretly, that not the least suspicion was excited in the mind of Mohabet. Jehangire treated him with the open confidence of friendship, and the Sultana appeared to meet him at all times with amicable cordiality. This, however, was only the treacherous calm which often heralds a tempest.

One morning, when the general, accompanied by a considerable retinue, went to pay his customary respects to the Emperor, he was attacked at the same moment from both ends of a narrow street. He was fired at from the windows of

several houses. Great confusion ensued; but Mohabet's followers being well armed, he put himself at their head and cut his way through the assailants. His escape was a miracle; the whole of his retinue were either wounded or slain, yet he was unhurt. The plot had been so well concerted, that not a single creature was prepared for it but those persons to whom it had been communicated. The spirit of disaffection soon spread. The guards who surrounded the Emperor were attacked by the citizens; and all, to the number of five hundred, put to the sword. The whole city of Cabul was in an uproar; and had not Mohabet fled to his camp, which was pitched without the walls, he would have fallen a sacrifice to their fury. Enraged at their perfidy, he prepared to take a speedy and ample revenge. The Sultana, perceiving the failure of her scheme, was aware that she was in a situation of extreme peril. The citizens, terrified at the preparations which the incensed general was making to punish their perfidy, sent some of the principal inhabitants to him, supplicating his forbearance; declaring that the tumult originated with the rabble, and offering to give up the ringleaders to his just indignation. Although Mohabet suspected that Noor Jehan had been the

principal instrument of the attack upon his life and the massacre of his guards, he dissembled his resentment, and accepted the offers of submission, but made a vow never again to enter Cabul. Having punished the ringleaders, he quitted the neighbourhood on the following morning, taking the Emperor with him.

On their way to Lahore, Mohabet suddenly resolved to resign his power, and to place Jehangire again at liberty. The resolution was as inexplicable as it was sudden and unexpected. He had no wish for empire. Having punished his enemies and vindicated his own wrongs, he exacted from Jehangire oblivion of the past; then disbanding his army, and retaining only a small retinue, he left his sovereign to his entire freedom. Noor Jehan, not in the least moved by this act of generosity on the part of a man whom her own intrigues had forced into rebellion, resolved now to seize the opportunity of consummating her revenge. She could not forget the indignities she had endured at the hand of Mohabet; that he had once attempted her life, obliged the Emperor to sign her death-warrant, and held her in odious captivity. She demanded that her royal consort should immediately order his execution.

"A man," said she, "so daring as to seize the person of his sovereign is a dangerous subject. The lustre of royalty must be diminished in the eyes of the people, while he who has dragged his prince from the throne is permitted to kneel before it with feigned allegiance."

Jehangire, remembering the provocations which Mohabet had received, and his temperate use of power, was shocked at the Sultana's vindictiveness, and commanded her, in a severe tone, to be silent.

Although she made no reply, she did not relinquish her design. Shortly afterwards, an attempt being made upon the general's life, he found it necessary to quit the camp secretly. The emissaries of the Empress were sent to capture him, but he effected his escape. He who had so lately had a victorious army at his command was now a fugitive, without a follower, and obliged to fly for his life. He had left all his wealth behind him, which was seized by the implacable Noor Jehan; and she issued a proclamation through all the provinces of the empire, denouncing him as a rebel, commanded him to be seized, and set a price upon his head. This violence on the part of the Sultana was disapproved both by the Emperor and the

Vizier, the latter of whom did not forget the courtesy shown to him by the fugitive after the defeat of the imperial army, when he was made prisoner by that very man who was now pursued with such hostility by a vindictive enemy who owed to him her life and liberty.

Asiph, Noor Jehan's brother, was not insensible to the merit of Mohabet. He knew him to be the best general of his time, an ardent lover of his country, and that he had been forced into rebellion by acts of repeated and unjustifiable aggression. He felt assured that such was not a man to be cast off from the state without doing it an injury that could never be repaired. Besides, he feared the lengths to which the Sultana's ambition might carry her, and considered it was high time it should be checked. Although Mohabet was a wanderer and a refugee under the denouncement of death, he bore up against his reverses with the same magnanimity which had actuated him when at the summit of his power.

The Vizier having found means to assure him of his friendship, Mohabet mounted his horse and rode four hundred miles without a single follower, to meet and confer with that high functionary; trusting to his bare and secret promise of protection.

The minister was at that time encamped in the road between Lahore and Delhi. Mohabet entered the camp in a mean habit, late in the evening. Placing himself in the passage which led from the apartments of the Vizier to the harem, and telling the eunuch that he wished to see that minister, the fugitive was immediately led into the latter's presence. When Asiph saw the wretched condition of Mohabet, he fell upon his neck and wept. Retiring with him to a secret apartment, the general declared his determination, notwithstanding the low ebb of his fortunes, to raise Shah Jehan to the imperial throne. Asiph was overjoyed at this declaration, as that prince was allied to him by the double tie of friendship and family connexion.

The result of this conference was a general declaration in favour of Jehangire's third son, who had already twice rebelled; but the Emperor dying a few months after, the state was freed from the probable effects of a civil war, and Prince Churrum ascended the imperial throne, under the title of Shah Jehan. From that moment the Sultana retired from the world, devoting the rest of her days to study, and the quiet enjoyments of domestic life. As her power ceased with the

death of Jehangire, her haughty spirit could not brook the public mortification of seeing herself holding a secondary rank in the empire. She never henceforward spoke upon state affairs, or allowed the subject to be mentioned in her presence. The singular beauty of her person continued almost to the last moment of her life; nor was the structure of her mind less remarkable. She was a woman of transcendent abilities; she rendered herself absolute in a government in which women were held to be both incapable and unworthy of holding the slightest share. It was not merely by the permissive weakness of Jehangire that she acquired such a political dominancy in the state; but by the pre-eminent superiority of her own mental endowments, and the indomitable energy of her character, before which the inferior mind and spirit of her royal husband shrank into comparative insignificance. She had as well the resolution to achieve as the intellects to project, and kept a mighty nation in awe by the extreme vigour of her administration. Though her passions were violent, her chastity was never impeached, and she lived an eminent pattern of conjugal fidelity. To her the world are indebted for that delicious

perfume so well known by the name of atar of roses, which she discovered during her retirement from public life. She died in the city of Lahore eighteen years after the death of Jehangire.

Historical Summary.

In the year of the Hegira 1037, Shah Jehan ascended the imperial throne of the Moguls. The Rajah of Bundelcund was taken prisoner by Mohabet, who was shortly afterwards removed from the head of the army. The Usbeck Tartars made a successful irruption into the imperial dominions, laid siege to the fort of Bamia in the mountains of Cabul, and made themselves masters of it. A. D. 1628.

Heg. 1038. Chan Jehan Lody escaped from Agra. Having opposed the accession of the reigning Emperor, he had been publicly disgraced. He was pursued and overtaken; but his retreat was secured by the gallantry of his son, Azmut, who engaged the imperial army, and thus enabled his father to get beyond the reach of his enemies. The noble Azmut, however, fell a sacrifice to his filial intrepidity; he was slain gallantly fighting against a host of foes. Lody having effected his escape, found an asylum at the court of the Nizam at Dowlatabad. This year died Shah Abbas, Sovereign of Persia. 1629.

Heg. 1040. Shah Jehan sent a large army into the Deccan to oppose Chan Lody, who had induced the princes of that extensive district to take up arms against the house of Timur. For a while Lody was successful against the imperial general, Eradit, whom he prevented from penetrating into Golconda, by throw- 1631.

A. D. 1631. ing himself into the passes of the mountains before his march, and thus repelling his advance. He was finally obliged to retreat; and being attacked by Lody, was defeated with great slaughter. Six Omrahs of the imperial army were slain. After this defeat, Eradit was superseded, and the Vizier appointed to command the army. This struck the confederates with dismay, and they abandoned their brave friend. The Nizam proposed terms; and Lody, being at length left without support, was pursued by a detachment of the Vizier's forces, and slain, with thirty followers only, who had resolved to participate in his fallen fortunes. During this year Shah Jehan's favourite Sultana died in childbed. She was the daughter of Asiph Jah, the Vizier, and niece of the celebrated Noor Jehan. The magnificent Taje Mahal was raised at Agra as a tribute of respect for her memory.

1633. Heg. 1044. Prince Dara, the Emperor's eldest son, married the daughter of his uncle Purvez. About the same time, Suja, the second son, espoused the daughter of Rustum Suffavi, of the royal line of Persia.

1634. Heg. 1044. Mohabet died. He was the greatest general of his time.

1635. Heg. 1045. A new throne of solid gold was erected at Agra. It was seven years in finishing, and the value of the jewels alone amounted to twelve hundred and fifty thousand pounds sterling. Among the ornaments was a parrot, the size of life, cut out of a single emerald.

1636. Heg. 1046. The Emperor again sent an army into the Deccan, reduced the refractory Rajahs to obedience, and concluded a peace with Persia.

1639. Heg. 1049. The capital of Bengal was destroyed by fire.

	A. D.
Heg. 1051. Asiph Jah, the Vizier, died, in the seventy-second year of his age.	1641.
Heg. 1052. Shah Jehan removed his court from Lahore to Agra, and completed the Taje Mahal, a splendid mausoleum, raised at vast expense, to the memory of his favourite Sultana, Mumtaza Zemani, niece to Noor Jehan.	1642.
Heg. 1053. The Usbeck Tartars, who had made incursions into the Emperor's territories, were defeated by Ali Murdan, governor of Cabul.	1643.
Heg. 1054. Aurungzebe was removed from the government of the Deccan.	1644.
Heg. 1055. The Sultana, Noor Jehan, died at Lahore.	1645.
Heg. 1056. By an imperial edict Prince Morad was banished to the mountains of Peshâwir.	1646.
Heg. 1057. Aurungzebe defeated the Usbecks, and took their camp.	1647.
Heg. 1058. The repairs of Delhi were finished, and the Emperor mounted the throne of his ancestors in this city, which afterwards became the capital of the Mogul empire.	1648.
Heg. 1059. Aurungzebe defeated the Persians, who had become masters of Candahar.	1649.
Heg. 1062. Dara was appointed successor to the empire, under the title of Shah Belind Akbal—the Emperor of exalted fortune.	1652.
Heg. 1066. Mahommed, the son of Aurungzebe, took Hyderabad, and defeated the King of Golconda.	1656.
Heg. 1067. Shah Jehan was seized with a paralysis, and his life despaired of: the management of public affairs consequently fell into the hands of Dara.	1657.
Heg. 1068. Aurungzebe, secretly aspiring to the throne, induced his brother Morad to join him, and	1658.

A. D. 1658. defeated the imperial army under the command of Dara, who retired to Delhi. Having raised fresh forces, they were corrupted by the wily conqueror. The confederate princes appeared before the capital with the combined army. Aurungzebe sent a message to his father, who commissioned his daughter, Jehanara, to visit him: she was deceived by his duplicity, and incautiously betrayed to him the resources of her brother Dara. He intercepted his father's letter to that prince; and shortly after Mahommed, Aurungzebe's son, seized within the citadel at Agra, Shah Jehan, who offered him the crown of the Moguls as the price of his release. It was declined by Mahommed. Morad having discovered the duplicity of Aurungzebe, in attempting to defeat it, was seized by his crafty brother, and sent prisoner to Agra. The ambitious conqueror advanced to Delhi, and mounted the imperial throne. Dara fled to Lahore.

The Prince and the Fakeer.

The Prince and the Fakeer.

CHAPTER I.

On the crest of a lofty hill in the province of Delhi, towards the north, was a fortress of impregnable strength, which had been frequently converted by the Mogul emperors into a state prison. The hill was inaccessible on all sides, presenting, to a height of two hundred and thirty feet from the base, sheer walls of rock, upon the scarped summit of which a light parapet surrounded one of the most extraordinary fortresses ever constructed by the art of man. Within the parapet it consisted of a shaft, sixty feet deep, sunk into the living stone. At the bottom of this shaft, chambers of considerable dimensions had been hollowed out, lighted by narrow loopholes, perforated through the mountain to the light, of which they admitted just sufficient to

render "darkness visible," and cast a sepulchral gloom through the apartments of this cavernous retreat.

The entrance of this stronghold was a circular aperture at the top of the rock, like the mouth of a well, four feet in diameter; through which the garrison, captives, provisions, and all things in short necessary to be deposited below, were lowered by means of a rope attached to a windlass.

In one of the chambers of this mountain fortress a prisoner was confined whose youth and accomplishments appeared to deserve a better fate. He was in the beautiful dawning of his manhood, when the blood bounds from the heart with a pulse of joy, and flows back again with an untroubled current. He had just passed his nineteenth year. The breeze of the mountain had fanned his cheek, and spread over it the glow of pure but delicate health. The down upon his upper lip had strengthened into a sleek dark curl. His limbs were rounded to their full proportions; and his whole form was one of a symmetry better adapted for the rich woofs from the looms of Cashmere, than for the helmet or cuirass. The languid expression of his dark, restless eye, showed that he was unhappy. The only furni-

ture in his prison was a rug upon which he slept, a hookah, a lamp, and a few utensils employed at his meals.

Notwithstanding the severity of his captivity, the prisoner kept up a sort of state in his solitary cell: he treated those attendants who had been appointed to wait upon him with a dignity which commanded respect, and at the same time with an amenity which won obedience. His dress, though of ordinary materials, except that portion of it which covered his brows, was disposed with a taste which at once bespoke refinement of mind and a consciousness of personal elevation. His turban, composed of a fine, thin, white muslin, worked in gold, was folded round his head with a care that evidently showed an attention to what was becoming; its numerous convolutions being precisely defined, and managed with almost geometrical precision. A common Cashmere shawl, loosely twisted, encircled his waist, the ends hanging on one side with that peculiar air of elegance which Orientals, whether Mussulman or Hindoo, know so well how to exhibit.

The prisoner had just thrown himself upon his rug to take his rest for the night, when an un-

usual stir upon the ramparts above roused him. He rose to listen. A parley was evidently going on with some one beneath the fortress. He repaired to a small ante-chamber, in which was a loophole that looked into a deep glen, whence the mountain rose within the bosom of which the place of his painful captivity had been hollowed. The night was calm: not a breeze stirred the thick foliage of the valley. The heavens were starred and radiant, though the moon's lamp was not yet hung out upon the battlements of heaven. The faint beams of the stars, though they scattered the radiance of their glories over the whole azure surface of the skies, did not penetrate the depths of the ravine formed by the mountain, down the sides of which the prisoner strained his eye from one of the narrow apertures that admitted light and air into his prison. The whole valley was immersed in that equivocal gloom, the more perceptible from contrast with the sparkling heaven, that seemed to smile in its beauty at the dull and torpid earth.

The captive, placing his ear against the artificial fissure in the rock, heard the following dialogue:

"I am the Prophet's messenger," said a voice

below. "I have a commission to the prisoner: refuse me admittance, and the curse of God's vicegerent be upon you!"

"If the Prophet's curse is breathed from the lips of one of his holy messengers, say who that messenger is."

"The fakeer of the valley, over whose reverend head ninety-six years have rolled; whose fasts and penances have gained him one of the high stations in paradise, to which he will be exalted when the angel of death shall waft him from the shores of time to that unknown land where the harvest of eternal joys shall be reaped."

"I know that voice, and shall heed the injunctions of so holy a man; but you must ascend alone: and I have no choice but to obey the orders imposed upon me, which are, to examine the person of every one admitted into this fortress. If it were the Prophet himself, I should be obliged to subject him to the scrutiny."

"Examine me as you will, but let me see your prisoner. I come a messenger to him from God's Prophet, and must perform my mission. Obedience is man's heritage; resist the divine will at your peril. Lower the rope, that I may ascend."

The prisoner was amazed at this announcement

of a visitor—an accredited minister of the Prophet too; but, upon reflection, he thought it might be the friendly interposition of some one who wished to break his bonds, and release him from a captivity as odious as it was undeserved.

The reverence formerly entertained for some of the fakeers was sufficient to prevent any surprise at the readiness with which the soldier upon guard consented to admit him into the fortress. The man who demanded admittance was well known to all the country as a troglodyte saint, inhabiting a cavern hollowed out of the earth in the valley immediately beneath the fortress, and whose severe mortifications had elevated him to such a degree of sanctity as to render his intercession with the Divinity a sure pledge of pardon. He was held to have immediate communion with Heaven; no one, therefore, ventured to gainsay anything insisted upon by this holy man. He always bore about him the sacred filth of his long penance; and the very odours from his body, which was foul with the unwashed incrustations of years, were supposed to be redolent of that paradise where, as he maintained, a place was reserved for him at the right hand of Allah's inspired minister.

Shortly after the dialogue just mentioned, the door of our captive's chamber was unclosed, and the fakeer stood before him, accompanied by one of the garrison. The holy man was quite naked, so that nothing could be concealed about him. Although the skin hung loose upon his long narrow countenance, like shrivelled parchment drawn over the bones of a skeleton, nevertheless there gleamed from underneath his sharp projecting brows a pair of eyes which appeared as if they had concentrated the rays of the mid-day sun, elancing them at intervals from orbs that seemed to glare with the intense lustre of those potential fires which light the throne of Eblis. He was perfectly straight; but his head had sunk upon the shoulders, where it seemed to rest, giving to the upper part of his figure an aspect of hideous deformity. His arms were long, flesh-less, and so stiff that he could not bring the joints even to a curve. He was a living skeleton.

The prisoner gazed upon him in silence, but did not utter a word. The fakeer stood still for a moment; then opening wide his gaunt, bony jaws, which displayed a black toothless chasm, and giving a sudden jerk of the head, a ring dropped from his mouth upon the floor. He now

shook from his long bushy hair a single blossom of the rhododendron, and a small bit of panel, upon which was rudely scratched the form of a dove escaping from the talons of a hawk. They both fell beside the ring. Pointing emphatically to the three several objects he quitted the cell, and immediately gave the signal to be drawn up. The soldier who had accompanied him remained behind, gathered up the things which the holy visitor had cast upon the floor, showed them severally to the prisoner, though he held them at a distance, and asked him what was the communication intended to be conveyed?

"I am not read in the lore of sages," replied the youth; "neither do I understand the mysteries of vaticination. You would probably make a better interpreter."

"I fear this will only increase the rigours of your confinement, unless you can explain why the holy man of the valley has made you this strange visit."

"In truth, I know not. I never saw him until this night; and how should I be able to expound what you, who are familiar with the stranger, cannot comprehend?"

"He would not have visited you without a motive."

"But I may be unacquainted with that motive."

"He is not a man to act without calculating results."

"Nevertheless his calculations may prove erroneous."

"Then you do not understand the nature of his communication?"

"I do not."

"These symbols will be shown to those who are quick at expounding riddles. Yet it is scarcely to be conceived that so worthy a minister of the Prophet should have addressed his symbols to one who cannot read their meaning."

"He is but a man, and all men are alike prone to error."

"True;—you may soon look for confinement in a deeper and darker chamber."

When the soldier quitted the prisoner's cell, the latter began to muse upon the communication intended to be conveyed by his unexpected visitor. He knew the fakeer to be a man eminent for his piety throughout the country, and therefore held in the greatest reverence. He was supposed to have supernatural communication with members of another world, and, consequently, was as

much feared as reverenced; which accounts for the respect and forbearance shown to him by the garrison of the mountain-fortress during his mysterious visit to their prisoner.

After the fakeer's departure, the unhappy captive began to reflect upon the signification of those symbols which had been dropped upon the floor before him. It was evident they were intended to convey some information, which it was expected his wit would be quick enough to comprehend. Although he had obtained but an imperfect glance at the ring which the soldier who had accompanied the stranger held in his own hand and at a distance, yet he fancied it was familiar to him. He had, however, only a vague and indefinite recollection of it; still it occurred to him that it was not the first time he had seen the golden trinket. Upon considering the matter further, it struck him that the ring must be a pledge sent from some one interested in his welfare: it implied confidence in the messenger, and a religious man could only be a messenger of peace.

The more he thought, the more satisfied he felt that he had received a message which warranted the expectation of liberty. The rhododendron

was a flower which grew upon the far mountains, where the genius of Liberty abides; it was therefore an emblem of that freedom which his heart panted to secure. In this symbol, then, he recognised the suggestion that his liberty might be obtained: but how? The third symbol was a sufficient corollary to the two first problems: a dove flying from a hawk told him, in terms sufficiently clear, that he must attempt his escape. It was by no means evident how this was to be accomplished; and the difficulties which presented themselves, as he calculated the probable chance of success, staggered his resolution, and almost crushed his hopes. It occurred to him, notwithstanding, that means would be supplied. That the fakeer had visited him for some especial purpose there could be no doubt; and he resolved to await the issue, satisfied it would not end where it had begun.

CHAPTER II.

NEXT morning the prisoner was confined to the ante-room, and told that on the following day his cell would be changed for one deeper in the heart of the mountain. He knew that the lower he descended, the more cheerless would be his habitation. About sunset an arrow was shot through the loophole of his cell, to the shaft of which was attached a strip of the palmyra leaf: upon this was scratched with a stylus the following words: "Unfasten the twisted thread at the head of this arrow; break off the steel barb, attach it to the end of the thread, and lower it into the valley as soon as darkness shall render it invisible to your guards."

Soon after the sun had sunk behind the ocean, with a palpitating heart the captive obeyed this injunction, and drew up a strong silken rope, about the size of his fore-finger; attached to which was another strip of palmyr leaf, with the following direction: "Conceal this, and take

the first seasonable opportunity to lower yourself from the rock. Despair not—you have friends; be vigilant and cautious—but despise difficulties." On that night the sky became overcast, and the heat oppressive to such a degree that the air of the prisoner's cell was scarcely respirable. There was no star visible throughout the whole expanse of the heavens. The sun had set behind vast masses of clouds, the skirts of which caught his rays, and reflected them in infinitely varied tints upon the summits of the hills. They were of an intensely opaque purple, but fringed with a fiery glow, as if the trains were already fired that communicated with the magazines concealed within their dark bosoms, and about to be ignited to a fearful explosion. The aspect of the skies had been lowering throughout the day. As evening advanced, the gloom had increased; and as the sun was withdrawing his light, which faded from the deepening volumes that hung around his disc, he seemed to glare ominously. He bade this world a sullen good-night, as he descended behind the grey waters to enlighten other spheres, and leave this to its repose; but the elements were too busy to allow that repose to be universal.

The hurricane roared over the sleepers' heads,

and roused them from their dreams to witness the strife of Nature in one of her sublimest conflicts. Long before midnight the tempest howled fearfully above the fortress. The sentinels upon the walls were drenched, and the clouds projected their fires, as if commencing the final conflagration. This was supposed to be the work of the fakeer, who had quitted the fort, muttering menaces of mischief. The storm was appalling. The soldiers shrank from the conflux of excited elements, and sought shelter within the shaft from their pitiless fury. The thunder burst with an explosion that appeared to convulse the whole expanse above. A peal shook the fortress to its foundation. The entire mountain seemed to stagger as if reeling over the chasm of an earthquake: a flash of lightning followed; the bolt struck the rock, and split it almost to the base. The thunder again rolled above, and the immediate silence which succeeded was like the intense silence of death.

The mischief had taken place upon that side of the mountain inhabited by the prisoner. He started from his couch; and so sudden was the effect produced by the thunderbolt, that, upon reaching the loophole, he perceived a huge mass had been struck down by the electric fire, and the

side of the mountain so shattered, that by pushing against the fractured body, a large portion of rock which formed the wall of his cell gave way, and rolled with a hideous crash into the valley beneath. The cries of the monkeys inhabiting the trees succeeded to the dull booming sound of the falling rock, and mingled strangely with the furious collision of elements above. The prisoner stood still awhile, amazed at the awful violence of the tempest, when the soldier who had attended the fakeer again abruptly entered his cell. He started at seeing the opening made by the lightning, and cautiously closed the door behind him.

"You must change your apartment this night; there is too much of heaven's light here for a state captive."

"I cannot well exchange for a worse," said the youth calmly: "conduct me whither you please; I am resigned to my destiny. Paradise hereafter is for the wretched here, but not for those who make them wretched."

"God is merciful!" ejaculated the soldier; "we are his instruments; he ratifies the punishment of those we doom to trial, and will reward his own instruments who perform their duty conscienti-

ously. I have sworn allegiance to the Emperor, and if he were to command me to cut your throat, I should not only be justified in my obedience, but should receive the divine sanction for doing my duty."

"This is the casuistry of tyrants; and with such a plea for murder, who can wonder that so many souls are freed from the incumbrance of mortal flesh amid the dark and secret recesses of the dungeon, where no eye can behold the horrible deed, but His to whose vision there is no limit, and to whose knowledge there is no boundary."

"You say well, but you are too clever to be free. In these perilous times, princes who have wise heads upon their shoulders may be dangerous subjects; therefore, 'tis the policy of courts to keep them from plotting. The hand of Heaven has been here to-night," said he, approaching the loophole, and surveying the opening which had been left by the thunderbolt: "the whole side of the mountain seems to have been splintered," he continued, running his hand along the side of the cell where the mischief appeared. "We must try what stone and mortar can do in the morning. But the leap is too high to apprehend escape."

By this time he had placed himself within the

rift made by the lightning. His head was projected forward, and his eyes strained to pierce into the gloomy ravine beneath. This was too tempting an opportunity to be lost. The captive sprang forward, thrust his hands suddenly against the soldier's shoulders, who with a scream of agony bounded from the edge of the opening, and fell like a plummet into the hideous gloom below. His body dashed through the branches ; the chattering of the monkeys was heard for a few moments, and then all was still.

Happily for him who had thus opportunely got rid of a foe, the storm continued so violent that none of the garrison heard the cry uttered by the man as he was propelled from the rock, nor the crash which followed; and as he did not return to his comrades, it was naturally enough surmised by them that he was keeping watch over the prisoner, of whom suspicions of an unfavourable nature had been entertained since the visit of the fakeer.

About two hours after midnight the storm abated. The clouds rolled from the heavens, and left its blue plains studded with stars, which cast a dun dingy light upon the objects around. The air was fresh and balmy. A gentle breeze stir-

red the foliage, from which it tenderly shook the spray gathered there by the recent tempest. The breath of heaven fanned the prisoner's cheek, and he felt as if it was kissed by the airs of paradise. He looked through the chasm which the lightning had formed in the mountain's side upon the far-spreading sky, and his heart leaped with an effervescent and holy joy. The aspirations of freedom went up from his bosom on the wings of gratitude. He saw the means of escape before him, and the flush of hope radiated upon his brow like the moon's light upon a calm solitary lake, in which its beauty is enshrined as flowers in amber. His thoughts were now free as the breeze which played upon his temples, and seemed as if imbued with the spirit of life. How the soul was tossed within him! but it was in a tumult of the most exquisite fruition.

He took the cord from a nook in which he had secreted it from the prying gaze of intruders. It was slight, but strong; and the hope of freedom subdued his fears of trusting to so slender a security. The difficulties of descending by so thin a rope were not easy to be overcome. The height from the ground on this side of the hill was at least ninety feet; and it would be all but impossi-

ble to slide from such an elevation by a rope scarcely more than the third of an inch in diameter, and which, being of silk, was so slippery that a firm hold of it could not be secured.

About twenty feet below the rift grew a thick bush from a fissure in the rock. The prisoner having secured his cord to a large iron ring in the door which closed upon his prison, fastened the silver mouthpiece of his hookah between the twistings, so that it crossed at right angles, and thus gave him a resting-place for his foot. Having made all secure, he slid down, tore the bush from the cleft, and with great difficulty regained his prison. He now continued to place, at intervals of about ten feet, small lengths of the stem and branches of the shrub, as he had already done the mouthpiece of his hookah, thus forming a kind of ladder.

Having prepared his frail instrument, he commenced his descent. He had passed the rope over a projecting crag above, in order to keep it clear from the face of the precipice. When he had descended midway, one of the steps broke, and he was left for a few moments clinging with desperate tenacity to the cord. He could not sustain himself—it flew through his hand; but his

progress was fortunately arrested by the next step, which happened to be stronger, and sustained his footing. The shock, however, of his rapid descent gave increased momentum to the rope, which began to turn round with considerable velocity; and this was increased by every effort made to still it.

The prisoner was becoming dizzy with the fearful whirl. He was afraid to move, expecting every moment that he should be obliged to relinquish his hold, and commit himself to the abyss beneath; when happily the cord slipped from the projecting buttress above, and dashed him with considerable violence against the stony face of the mountain. Though severely bruised, he managed to retain his hold of the silken ladder now no longer agitated; and after pausing a moment to recover his self-possession, he continued to lower himself until his progress was arrested by the branches of a large tree. Upon these he rested, and determined to remain till dawn.

As soon as the first beam of day slanted over the valley in which the escaped prisoner had taken refuge, he perceived that he was in the heart of a thickly-wooded glen, surrounded by a family of monkeys, which began to announce their dissatis-

faction at his unwelcome intrusion by the most discordant chattering. Fearing that their din might give warning of his escape to the garrison above, he descended the tree with all possible despatch; when his joy was only equalled by his astonishment at beholding before him the unsightly form of the fakeer.

"Welcome to liberty! God is merciful! Your enemies shall be scattered, and the captive prince enthroned! Retire with me to my dwelling, and you shall know further."

Saying this, the holy man led the way, followed by the grandson of Jehangire: for he who had just escaped from captivity was no less a personage than Dawir Buxsh, son of Sultan Chusero, and heir to the imperial throne. Beneath the root of a large forest tree, a hole had been dug to the depth of seven feet, which led into a small cavern scarcely two yards square. The mode of entrance and egress was by means of the notched trunk of a small tree, that served as a ladder.

Before he entered the subterranean retreat of his venerable companion, the young prince, aided by the old man, twisted round a tree the cord by which he had escaped from the fortress, and with a stick tightened it until it gave way above, just

where it had been chafed by the rough ledge over which it had been thrown to prevent contact with the mountain side. Having taken this precaution, he entered the sacred dwelling of the fakeer.

CHAPTER III.

"WELCOME," said the venerable man, "to the abode of the free! You interpreted the symbols as I had anticipated, and your liberty is secured. The Emperor is dead, and the Vizier seeks to place you upon the throne as legitimate heir of the empire. You must repair instantly to the capital, and the crown will be placed upon your head."

"May not this be a device," asked the prince musingly, "to seduce me into the power of new enemies? Is not Shah Jehan in arms? What forces can I oppose to so powerful a rival?"

"The kingdom is divided. Your uncle Sheriar, at the Sultana's instigation, claims the succession, and is prepared to substantiate his claims by force of arms; but the Vizier is determined to place the sceptre in your grasp; and, backed by the imperial army under the conduct of such a leader, no one can be in a condition to dispute your lawful inheritance with any chance of success. Your father's rebellion is forgotten, and the people shout your name with enthusiasm."

"But how," inquired the prince, with a keen glance at the venerable minister of the Prophet, —"how have all these facts reached this lone retreat?"

"My son," replied the old man solemnly, "this lone retreat is celebrated from one extremity of Hindostan to the other, and princes visit the cavern of the fakeer. I am consulted by the wisest legislators, as well as by the ignorant vagrant whose only abode is the forest jungle, and his bed the dry turf. I am respected, but I am also feared. My friendship has been won in your behalf: do not despise it, for my enmity can reach you even upon the throne, though surrounded by armies and directed by the wisest counsellors."

"Well, father, it is certain that I cannot be in a worse position than I was, confined in the dark bowels of yonder mountain. Liberty is a cheap purchase almost at any price. Your good-will assures me I can scarcely fail of success, supported by the alliance and directed by the counsels of so holy a man. But suppose the garrison should seek me in this retreat; am I secure from their search?"

"They have too much respect for the old man of the valley to desecrate the sanctuary which he has

rendered sacred by an occupation of more than fifty years. But even should they be so bold as to forget what is due to the character of one whose life has been devoted to God, their efforts to recapture you will not avail:—there is succour at hand."

"Who is advancing to my rescue?"

"One, my son, little accustomed to mount the war-horse: but when the heart once rouses the spirit to action, the meek dove becomes an eagle in all things—save in a thirst for blood."

By this time the sound of voices was heard in various directions round the fakeer's abode. The wood grew so thickly in the valley, that in many parts it was impossible to penetrate; and the fakeer's retreat was in the most inaccessible part of the jungle. There was, however, a narrow path leading to it from the plain, which happened to be known to one of the garrison, who undertook to conduct his comrades to the spot. Not anticipating any interruption in their search after the fugitive, a very small party had undertaken the pursuit.

The prince was alarmed as the voices approached, but his venerable companion endeavoured to assure him.

"Young man," said he, "this is not a mo-

ment for idle fears. Remember that the success of human endeavour is permitted only where it answers the wise ends of Him who is the source of all wisdom. I have heard that you once escaped the tiger's deadly spring: but know, that He who could pluck thee from the jaws of the tiger can likewise rescue thee from the arm of man. Bear this, moreover, in mind, that the prince who has no confidence in God cannot be fit to reign; for no man can rule an empire wisely except God be with him."

The party in search of the prince had now surrounded the cavern in which he lay concealed.

"Father," said one of the soldiers, who seemed to be their leader, "our prisoner has escaped, and we must seek for him in your burrow. He would, no doubt, prefer being buried alive here, with such holy company, to occupying a more spacious abode higher up the hill, without any merrier companions than his own thoughts."

"Soldier!" said the fakeer, rising from his underground dwelling, and standing before the party with an aspect of stern indignation, "search where you list: profane the sanctuary of the Prophet's vicegerent by your unhallowed intrusion, and be the consequences upon your own head!"

"My head for the consequences!" said the man, and leaped down into the subterraneous abode of sanctity.

At this moment the fakeer stepped behind a tree—struck rapidly upon a gong three blows, which resounded through the valley. The soldier now hailed his companions from below, announcing to them that he had found their prisoner. The party consisted of ten men, nine of whom had by this time surrounded the entrance of the cavern to assist their comrade in securing the captive: they had, however, no sooner done this, than each man fell to the earth transfixed with an arrow. A party of twenty Bheels, rushing from their ambush, instantly despatched and stripped the wounded soldiers.

"Now," said the fakeer, addressing the prince, who had ascended from his place of sanctuary, "you see how little cause there was for distrust. Those who have been instrumental to your escape had calculated the probabilities of a recapture too nicely not to provide against such a contingency. You must follow your rescuers, who will conduct you to a place of security."

"But shall I not leave you in jeopardy? Will it not be surmised that you have been privy to my

escape, and will not my enemies wreak their vengeance upon you?"

"Should they do their worst, they can only cut off the ragged remnant of an existence now well nigh spun to its last thread. Let them do what they list—I fear them not. I have fulfilled the purposes of my vocation, and am ready to enter upon the consummation of my destiny. Still, while I live, the benefits of my experience are at your command."

The prince now quitted the spot with the old man's blessing, and followed the Bheels into the thickest of the jungle. These half-savage mountaineers threaded the thicket with surprising facility, clearing the way before their royal charge, and treating him with a rude courtesy which showed that they were less barbarians by nature than by circumstance. They were almost entirely naked, having only a narrow strip of cloth round the loins, and another round the head, meant to represent a turban, or rather a skull-cap. They were armed with bows and arrows of the rudest construction, but which they used with a skill perfectly amazing. During their progress through the forest, several of them took occasion to display their dexterity before the royal stranger.

A partridge rose from some long grass in an open vista in the wood, and, while on the wing, was transfixed with an arrow by one of the Bheels. A pigeon was killed in a similar manner. A hare fell a victim to the dexterity of a third archer.

After travelling about six hours, they reached a rude village, nearly on the summit of a hill, in the gorge of a deep glen. The prince was here shown into the best habitation the village afforded; which was a small hovel thatched with dried plantain-leaves, the walls consisting of thin bamboos interlaced with jungle-grass, the floor of mud being overlaid with a compost of cowdung and straw. A coarse rug was spread in one corner, and this constituted the whole furniture of the apartment.

The soldier who had sprung into the fakeer's cave, and thus escaped the arrows of the Bheels, they took prisoner, and made him accompany them to the village. On their arrival, a consultation being held, they determined to put him to death. He was accordingly hung with his own turban upon the branch of a tree; and while struggling in the agonies of strangulation, six arrows were discharged at him. His body was afterwards cut down, stripped, and thrown into a well.

Dismal as the hovel was into which the prince

was obliged to creep, the consciousness of freedom imparted to it an air of comfort which he had never yet enjoyed so sensibly even in his father's palace. Before evening closed in, a bustle was heard in the village, which was almost immediately followed by a palankeen and two hackeries,* accompanied by about twenty attendants. Such a circumstance having probably never before occurred in a village of poor Bheels, excited a considerable sensation among the inhabitants; some of whom, however, were evidently so little overcome by surprise, as to render it more than probable that the arrival had not been altogether unexpected. The prince could not help feeling surprise when the fact was announced to him; and on quitting the hut, in which he had flung himself upon the rug, in order to snatch a brief repose after the fatigues of his journey, his astonishment was only surpassed by his delight at meeting in the stranger, whose arrival had just been announced to him, the daughter of Sultan Sheriar, who, immediately upon the death of Jehangire, had set up his claim to the imperial throne.

An attachment had long subsisted between the

* A hackery is a covered carriage, drawn by bullocks.

daughter of Shariar, and the heir of Chusero, his eldest brother, who had been murdered by Shah Jehan, third son of the deceased monarch Jehangire. This attachment was originally encouraged by the parents; but Sultan Shariar had lately withheld his approbation upon the most futile pleas, his motives becoming sufficiently evident upon the death of his father, the late Emperor, whom he sought to succeed as sovereign of the Moguls. Prince Dawir Buxsh, son of Chusero, and consequently the lawful successor of his grandfather, had been imprisoned through the intrigues of his uncle, Shariar, who had persuaded the credulous Emperor that the young prince was engaged in a conspiracy against his life. When Jehangire died, Shariar immediately resolved to assert his title to the sovereignty of the Mogul empire His daughter, whose affection for her cousin had not abated in spite of her parent's hostility, effected the escape of Dawir Buxsh, through the intervention of the fakeer, who hired a body of Bheels, whom he placed in ambush near his underground dwelling, and accomplished the prince's retreat, as has been already described. The princess had for some days taken up her abode

in the neighbourhood, and had been apprised about noon of the success of those measures she had employed for the prince's release. Upon receiving this information, she immediately set out for the village, where she arrived about the close of day.

The prince was overjoyed at so unexpected a meeting; he could scarcely control the excess of his rapture. Blessings seemed so to accumulate upon him, that he already began to fancy he had swallowed the last bitter in the draught of life, which had been sweetened by a medicament that had either expelled or spiritualized the minutest dross, and that there now remained nothing but a residuum of joy. He recollected the rebukes of the holy man to whom he was so signally indebted for his release from an odious bondage, and readily persuaded himself that there was something prophetic in his solemn homily.

"Welcome," said he, "sweet lady," as he handed the princess from her palankeen: "this is, indeed, an unexpected but welcome meeting. To what am I indebted for so signal a gratification?"

"To a woman's affection, prince, which, like the lightning of Heaven, overcomes all obstacles; and, though it sometimes blasts that on which it

falls, is nevertheless a light and a glory: love throws a beam of gladness over the dark lines of human destiny, as lightning gilds the storm."

"The comparison is somewhat ominous. I would rather feel the warm ' of a woman's love, than the bright shaft which flies before the thunder. It has a deadly gleam, when one knows that death may be in its flash. The fires of true love harm not. But welcome, lady, to the retreat of a poor fugitive, whose only abode is the wretched hovel of the mountain robber."

"You will make but a short sojourn here among these rude though friendly mountaineers. To-morrow you may expect to meet friends ready to place you upon that throne which you were born to honour. I have had a hard struggle between filial love and the obligations of a plighted affection, but the latter have prevailed. As your affianced bride, I quitted my father's roof to join you, when I saw he would deprive you of your lawful inheritance. The Vizier has armed in your cause, and the imperial army under his command is now encamped in the neighbourhood of Lahore, where he is expecting you to join him, having been apprised of the measures to be adopted for your escape. My father's army is on its march towards the capital

and when the adverse forces meet, the struggle will no doubt be desperate."

The prince resigned his hut to the princess, who ordered in her palankeen, within which she determined to pass the night. Meanwhile, Dawir Buxsh was conducted to another hut, much less clean and commodious than that he had quitted, as a Bheel family had vacated it in order to accommodate him. The attendants of the princess were dispersed about the village, most of them spreading their rugs under trees, satisfied with that sort of accommodation which, though no hardship in eastern climes, would be considered among the severest in countries where excess of refinement has almost given a new interpretation to privation.

CHAPTER IV.

The royal fugitive now thought that he was beyond the reach of pursuit, and in a state of enviable tranquillity threw himself upon a rug in a corner of his hovel. He was too happy to sleep, and lay thinking upon the splendid prospects opening before him, and which appeared on the eve of consummation. The first man in the empire had armed in his cause; the whole imperial army appeared favourable to his pretensions, and few or none of the principal Omrahs, so far as he could ascertain, had declared against him. He was secure in the affections of the most beautiful princess of her age. Being young, in high health, and in the vigour of early manhood, he foresaw nothing but enjoyment.

As he lay pondering the happin[illegible] which his full and joyous heart flattered itself was in store for him, he seemed to be carried into a new but delightful world, where the visionary was not to be distinguished from the true, but where there

was nothing of the one or the other to arrest that full tide of fruition which was flowing in upon him. His very body appeared to be lifted above this gross earth; and though it was reclined upon a coarse rug, within the small dirty sty of a Bheel, it was at that moment alive to sensations of thrilling delight. The soul was too buoyant to be tied down to the material pleasures of this gross world, but soared with the imagination into a new field of bliss, where, though it was entranced in a delusive dream of the moment, this was nevertheless one of those exquisite fictions which have all the glow and vividness of the most distinct reality. These happy visions at length gave way to a profound sleep; his senses were steeped in an unconsciousness so absolute, that no perceptible image passed over the fine speculum of the brain, which the heavy breath of slumber had rendered too dull for reflection. In the midst of his stubborn repose he was roused by sounds that portended evil. He listened; the clash of arms was distinguishable, and presently blended with the shouts of conflict. Morning had not yet dawned, but the stars were bright above, and there was sufficient light to distinguish objects not very remote. The prince was staggered, he knew not what to think. It oc-

curred to him that part of the garrison, from whose custody he had escaped, must have traced him to his retreat, and were in the act of attempting a rescue. Impelled by his apprehension for the princess, he rushed towards the hut which she occupied, but to his consternation found it deserted. None of her attendants were at hand. The shouts of battle still sounded in his ears; he bounded forward, but was almost immediately surrounded. Being unarmed, he could offer no resistance. How suddenly was the beautiful fabric raised by the enthusiastic ardour of hope subverted! His hands were instantly secured, and he was ordered to proceed between two soldiers, two preceding and two following.

Light streaks of grey were beginning to dapple the horizon. The prince was now made acquainted with the nature of the late conflict, which he already partly suspected. Sultan Shariar, having been apprized, just before the princess quitted her home, that she had projected a plan for the delivery of Dawir Buxsh, had ordered a strong party of troops to follow in her track, suspecting that she was about to proceed to the place where his competitor for the throne of the Moguls would lie concealed, if he should succeed in effecting his es-

cape. The princess, the better to cover her design, quitted her home under pretence of making a pilgrimage to an ancient mosque, raised by one of the early Mahomedan conquerors. Her intention was no secret to her father, who ordered her to be followed at a convenient distance, and brought back when she should have reached the place of her destination, with the Prince Dawir Buxsh, if he should be discovered there. This order had been executed with such success, that both the princess and her affianced husband fell into the hands of the detachment from Shariar's army, as has been already detailed.

As the dawn advanced, the troops were galled by arrows from the Bheels, who lay in ambush in the various thickets of the jungle. Not an enemy was to be seen, and yet the frequent wounds received by the Sultan's soldiers as they descended the hill, told with a forcible eloquence how deadly were the foes by whom they were surrounded. In order to keep their body as compact as possible, that it might present less surface to the arrows of the foe, they marched in close column of six deep, dividing in the centre, where the princess was borne in her palankeen; and the prince, guarded by six soldiers, brought up the rear. The column

was dreadfully galled as it proceeded. Several soldiers fell dead from the arrows of their secret foes. There was no evading the peril, and no possibility of reaching the bowmen, who were so intimately acquainted with every intricacy of the jungle, that the moment they were pursued, they disappeared among the thickets, where it was impossible to follow them.

The prince was vigilantly guarded; but in passing through a dark hollow of the wood, the two soldiers on either side of him received at the same moment an arrow in their temples, and expired on the spot, the four others being likewise wounded, though not mortally. A party of Bheels darted from the covert in an instant and seized the captive, but were impeded by the brave resistance of the four wounded soldiers until a party of the main body came up and put those bold mountaineers to flight. In the struggle, their royal prisoner received a severe sabre-cut on the back part of his arm, which was bound up tightly with his turban to prevent the effusion of blood. Happily for Sultan Shariar's troops, their march through the jungle was not a long one, or they would have been more than probably cut off to a man.

Upon gaining the bottom of the hill, the detach-

ment entered a naked plain, in which, after a short march, they halted near a village, under a tope or grove of mango trees. Such, however, was the severe execution done among them in their progress through the forest, that upon numbering their force, they discovered that fifteen out of a hundred had been killed, and thirty-two wounded, nine of whom they were obliged to leave behind them at the village, to the care of the native surgeons. The prince's arm was here examined, but the hurt, though severe, was found to be only a flesh wound; which being dressed, the detachment proceeded on its march after taking a slight repast, and halted a second time at another village, about two hours before noon. Here the prince began to suffer considerable pain from his wound. He became feverish and depressed. He requested to be allowed an interview with the princess, which was refused. The reaction of disappointment soon increased his feverish symptoms to an alarming extent. He was now as despondent as he had been previously exhilarated, and saw nothing in the future but gigantic miseries, or the shadows of departed joys. His heart sickened; he gave way to unmanly sorrow. His ardent spirit, which had been

elevated to the highest pinnacle of hope, sank at once into the very lowest depths of despair. He felt as if the stroke of death would be a blessing. His fever increased to such a degree that he was unable to proceed, for he had hitherto been forced to march like a common soldier. In consequence of his illness a rude litter was provided, upon which he was placed, a coarse cloth being thrown over it to exclude the scorching rays of the sun; and he thus proceeded, borne upon the shoulders of six men. No entreaties could induce the officer commanding the detachment to allow him to hold a moment's conversation with Shariar's daughter, who was guarded with a vigilance that defied evasion. She was, however, treated with the greatest respect, and every attention paid to her comfort; while her cousin, on the contrary, had not only been treated with marked disrespect, but subjected to many painful indignities. Of this his companion in sorrow was ignorant. Still, although every wish she expressed consistent with her security was immediately granted, yet her earnest solicitations to see the prince were refused. She therefore proceeded in silence and in sadness under this bitterest privation of her captivity.

The illness of Dawir Buxsh was studiously kept from her knowledge, nor until they reached their destination was the circumstance of his having been wounded made known to her.

Upon their arrival at Shariar's camp, the prince was consigned to a tent which was rigidly guarded; and the father having upbraided his daughter with treachery, gave her into the custody of some of the female attendants of the harem, who took her to a tent in the rear of the encampment, likewise surrounded by a numerous and vigilant guard. Her ordinary attendants were withdrawn; the men distributed in different divisions of the army, and the women sent to other services.

The royal prisoner was kept in rigid confinement; and though his fever became high and threatened to be fatal, not even a servant was permitted to wait upon him. He was deeply galled at this indignity; but the guards derided his expostulations, and he was left to struggle against his malady as he best might. The strength of his constitution prevailed. On the third day the violence of his fever abated, and his wound began rapidly to heal.

Shariar, hearing that the Vizier was advancing towards him with the imperial army, which,

though less in number than his own, was composed of choicer troops, was afraid of proceeding to extremities against his prisoner, lest it should weaken his own cause by casting upon him the slur of having murdered a nephew and lawful heir to the throne. He was nevertheless in hopes that harsh treatment might aggravate the fever which the prince's wound had induced, and thus, by removing out of his way a dangerous competitor, leave the road to empire comparatively clear before him.

The Vizier had now advanced within two coss of Shariar's army, which was encamped on the opposite side of a narrow but deep stream, that divided the hostile forces. Shariar had taken up a strong position on the slope of a hill, flanked on one side by the stream, and on the other by a thick jungle. The Vizier crossed this stream during the night, at a ford about two miles below the enemy's encampment, and appeared next morning drawn up in battle array upon the plain. His army was formed into three divisions; the right wing being commanded by Mohabet Chan, the second by an Omrah who had distinguished himself in the Deccan, under Shah Jehan, and the centre by the Vizier in person. As the army of Sha-

riar was in too strong a position to render an attack prudent on the part of the imperialists, the Vizier, suspecting that the enemy, confiding in superior numbers, would rush down upon him from the height which they occupied, warily awaited the expected onset. He was not deceived in this conjecture. Shariar, conceiving that the impetuosity of a charge from the elevation of his position would give him considerable advantage, commanded a vigorous onset to be made against the enemy's centre, where the Vizier commanded. The shock was so great that the imperialists recoiled; but Mohabet Chan immediately brought up his men, who, attacking the Sultan's troops with great energy upon their left flank, soon checked the momentary advantage which they had obtained, and the battle raged for some time with a pretty near equality of success.

The raw forces of Shariar were several times repulsed by the well-disciplined valour of the imperial soldiers; but fresh troops rushed to the charge as their comrades gave way, and the balance of victory hung for some time doubtful. The Vizier's elephant was killed under him, but he leaped from the howdah, and fought on foot with a spirit which infused new courage into his army, and baffled the

repeated assaults of the enemy. Whilst the right wing, under the command of Mohabet, and the centre, at the head of which the Vizier still fought in person, were maintaining a desperate conflict against superior numbers, with slow but manifest advantage, the left wing was repulsed, and obliged to retreat before the impetuous charge of its foes, headed by their princes. At this critical moment, Dawir Buxsh, who had managed during the confusion of the battle to escape from his guards, was seen in full career towards the contending armies. He had mounted a charger which had galloped from the battle on the death of its rider. Reaching the left wing of the imperial army as it was retreating before its victors, he shouted to the soldiers to support their sovereign. The enemy paused for an instant in their career of pursuit, unable to comprehend the arrival of a foe from their own camp. During that pause the imperialists rallied. Dawir Buxsh placed himself at their head, charged and drove back the insurgents, who, becoming dispirited by so unexpected a check, faltered, retreated, and their retreat was soon converted into a total rout. The centre and right wing, commanded by the Vizier and Mohabet Chan, had already obtained so decided an advan-

tage over the main body of the army to which they were opposed, that the rout of the enemy's right wing almost immediately decided the fortune of the day. The army of Shariar was totally defeated, and he fell into the hands of the Vizier. The slaughter was dreadful; the victory decisive.

CHAPTER V.

PRINCE DAWIR BUXSH was received with loud acclamation by the troops. His late exploit gave them hopes of an emperor that would lead them on to conquest. He was borne in triumph to the imperial camp, and next day the army proceeded to Agra. Sultan Shariar's daughter had fallen into the victor's hands. The youthful sovereign desired that she might be brought into his presence; she accordingly appeared before him, her bosom agitated by conflicting emotions. She was at once elated by joy at her lover's release, and depressed by sorrow at her father's captivity. Her beauty was heightened by the singular variety of feeling which her countenance expressed. She fell at the prince's feet: he affectionately raised her, and said, with earnest but tender passion,

" Let not my preserver kneel to one who is indebted to her for his liberty — perhaps his life; for the dungeon soon puts an end to earthly capti-

vities. The star of our destinies has risen—may it ascend in glory to its meridian! As soon as I am placed upon the musnud, our marriage shall be solemnized, and we will enjoy the consummation of our happiness, which adverse chances have so long delayed."

"But my father!" exclaimed the princess with a suffused eye and quivering lip.

"He will, for the present, remain a prisoner. He has sought to usurp the crown. The sovereign of the Moguls must perform his duty to his people as well as to himself."

This was said with a tone of grave determination, which strikingly contrasted with the warm glow of tenderness that had preceded it. There was an expression of almost stern resolution in the calm but brilliant gleam of the speaker's eye. The princess burst into tears.

"Be composed, lady," said the prince, resuming his former tenderness, "and confide in my justice, which I trust will never neutralize my clemency. Your father has erred; and if he may not be forgiven, for your sake his life is sacred."

The daughter gave an hysteric sob, threw herself upon the prince's neck, and yielded to an irrepressible burst of emotion. She was relieved

by the promise: a smile dilated her brow; her dark full eye expanded with a strong impulse of gratitude; and a single tear trickled slowly down her cheek, upon which a delicate smile quivered, like sunshine following the shower. The attendants were moved at the scene; the prince was subdued, still his determination relative to the prisoner, which had not yet transpired, remained unaltered. His attachment towards his daughter was strong and fervent, but he could not forget that he had been grossly wronged. The indignities so wantonly heaped upon him during his march to Shariar's camp, when suffering from the pain of his wound, did not pass from his mind, and it is not the character of despotic princes to suffer injury to escape retribution.

The princess retired from the royal tent with a joyous satisfaction arising from the assurance that her father's life should be spared. She could not for a moment suppose that the man by whom she was evidently beloved, would allow himself long to entertain feelings of hostility towards her parent, however great the provocation. But she knew not the heart of him upon whose clemency she relied. Revenge is the most difficult passion

of our nature to subdue; and its indulgence, among absolute princes, is one of the greatest evils of despotism.

Dawir Buxsh proceeded to Agra, accompanied by the Vizier and Mohabet Chan, and was hailed as their Emperor by the universal acclamation of the citizens. He was immediately seated upon the musnud, and a proclamation issued for the celebration of the royal nuptials with the daughter of Sultan Shariar.

On the following day the prisoner was summoned into the presence of his imperial nephew. He appeared with an emaciated countenance and a dejected mien. He had been long suffering from a dreadful malady, which had almost reduced him to a shadow. His daughter was present when her parent entered, and seeing his bitter dejection, she threw herself upon his bosom in a paroxysm of filial grief. She was gently removed by the attendants.

"What does the man deserve," asked Dawir Buxsh sternly, turning towards the disconsolate prisoner, "who has rebelled against his lawful sovereign, cast him into prison, treated him with indignity, and exposed his life to jeopardy?"

Shariar was silent.

"Silence is the most eloquent confession of guilt," continued the Emperor; "dost thou not deserve that death, which, had your ambitious arms succeeded, you had no doubt in reserve for me?"

"I am in your power," replied Shariar firmly; "you can exercise that power as your discretion may prompt. I may be your victim, but nothing shall force me to disclose my intentions. I acted as I felt justified in acting; it has ended in failure, and I am prepared to pay the penalty."

The indignation of the young Emperor was kindled, and he said fiercely, "Hoary traitors must not escape punishment, however nearly allied to the throne. I have promised to spare your life," said he, "but the light of heaven shall never more beam upon those eyes."

Saying this, he rose, and gave the signal to a soldier, who advanced and seized the unhappy Shariar. His daughter, with a wild scream of agony, threw herself between the ruffian and his victim; but she was instantly torn from the embraces of her parent, who stood with patient resignation, awaiting the execution of his dreadful sentence. The soldier advanced, and plunged the point of his crease into both eyes of the unfortunate Sultan. With the blood trickling down his cheeks,

mingled with tears, he implored to be once more permitted to embrace his child. She rushed into his arms.

"Tyrant!" said she, addressing the young Emperor, "this heart shall never be united with that of one whose hand is stained with my parent's blood. I have no longer anything to render this world desirable, and quit it imprecating the malediction of a dying woman upon thy head!"

Saying this, she seized a crease which was stuck in the girdle of one of the guards, drew it suddenly before he was aware of her purpose, and plunging it into her bosom, fell dead at the soldier's feet. The prince was staggered at the dreadful but unexpected issue of his own severity. He had never for a moment contemplated such a consummation. His attachment to the princess had been ardent, but he could not forget the wrongs received at the hands of her father.

From this moment a cloud of gloom hung upon his brow. He saw no one; and his seclusion gave umbrage to his subjects, who began to murmur at the want of enterprise in their new Sovereign. Rumours were daily spreading of Shah Jehan's approach to avenge the indignity offered to his brother Shariar, and the death of that prince's

daughter; but the Emperor disregarded these rumours, fancying himself secure in the affections of his people, and in the support of the Vizier and Mohabet Chan.

Shortly after the decease of his affianced bride, the venerable fakeer stood before Dawir Buxsh, and with undaunted severity upbraided him with his cruel rigour towards his uncle.

"Your throne totters," he said solemnly; "the sceptre which a tyrant sways is ever held in a feeble grasp, and by a precarious tenure. Justice can never sanction cruelty; and you should have remembered that you were indebted for liberty, most probably for life, to the daughter of that prince whom you have so wantonly mutilated. The blood of that daughter will cry from the earth against you. Heaven has its punishment for guilty sovereigns, and your doom has gone forth."

The youthful monarch was subdued by the solemn earnestness of the holy man, and quailed before him.

"Father," he said, "I have but visited a rebel with merited retribution. His cruelties towards me have been repaid with cruelty, which the laws of justice sanction."

"But which," fervently exclaimed the fakeer, "the laws of religion forbid. The justice of tyrants is not the justice of the great and good God, who so tempers it with mercy that repentance converts it into a blessing both to the receiver and the giver. Justice becomes a bane where mercy is defied and scorned. Retribution is an attribute which belongs alone to Omnipotence; man knows not how to exercise it. You have attempted to grasp the thunder: beware that it does not recoil upon your own head with that terrible energy which leaves behind the fearful impress of destruction."

Bold as was the rebuke of this venerable man, and even insolent as was his intrusion and bearing, yet such was his character for sanctity, and so universal the awe in which he was held, that no one attempted to resent the indignity offered to their sovereign, and the fakeer quitted the imperial presence with a smile of calm defiance, as he tottered out of the palace. The Emperor called to mind his visit while he was a captive, and remembered that to him he was chiefly indebted for the success of the princess's plan for his escape, which had been eventually crowned with such complete success; he therefore permitted him to pass from the palace without molestation. The old man's

words, however, had sunk deep into the heart of Dawir Buxsh, and harrowed him to the quick. There was a fearful import in them which troubled him sorely: they sounded like the dark presage of doom.

The rumours of his uncle Shah Jehan's approach daily strengthened, and he already began to fancy that he saw his own speedy downfall. Those nobles who were more immediately about his person, whispered doubts of the Vizier's sincerity, and these doubts were but too soon confirmed. The report of Shah Jehan's march towards the capital was shortly verified. He reached Lahore at the head of a numerous army, and encamped a few miles from the city. The young Emperor had taken no measures to interrupt his passage, relying upon the fidelity of the Vizier and Mohabet Chan, both of whom, as he found out too late, had favoured his uncle's designs upon the throne. He received a summons, which was communicated by the Vizier, to resign the sceptre into older and abler hands. When the unhappy sovereign upbraided his minister with treachery, the latter did not hesitate to confess that he had simply favoured his accession, in order to give time for Shah Jehan to collect an army and put

himself in a condition to dispute his right. "The Moguls," continued the Vizier, "do not like to be governed either by boys or by women, both of whom ought to yield to the natural supremacy of men."

This was not the time to dispute a doctrine subversive of all legitimate rights, with one who had the power to illustrate it in his own hands. Dawir Buxsh, without a moment's hesitation, seeing that opposition would be mere fatuity, consented to relinquish the imperial sceptre provided his life were spared, and a competent maintenance assured to him. No answer was returned to these stipulations, but on the following day the deposed Emperor was confined to one of the lower apartments of the Seraglio, and Shah Jehan proclaimed Emperor, with almost universal consent:—such is human tergiversation! The people have no lasting affection for sovereigns. The favourite of to-day is an object of hatred to-morrow—

> "Within the hollow crown
> That rounds the mortal temples of a king,
> Death keeps his court."

Dawir Buxsh, who had been lately raised to a throne amid popular acclamation, was now hurled from his elevation, and more an object of

pity than the meanest among those whom he had so lately governed. His cruelty to the unhappy Shariar too late filled him with remorse. The death of that Sultan's daughter tortured his memory with a thousand bitter pangs. He saw that his fate was determined on, and the lingering desire of life made him look forward to death with horror.

On the morning after his uncle's accession to the throne of the Moguls, two eunuchs entered the prison of Dawir Buxsh: he immediately knew that he was to die, and throwing himself upon his knees, was strangled whilst in the act of putting up a prayer to Heaven. The aspiration was cut short by the bow-string, and Sultan Shariar and his daughter were both fully avenged.

The Omrah's Daughter.

The Omrah's Daughter.

CHAPTER I.

Lody Chan was seated in the veranda of his palace smoking his hookah, and enjoying the luxury of repose which that exquisite instrument is so admirably calculated to induce. Behind him stood a tall attendant dressed in a tunic of green cloth, his waist encircled by a red cummer-bund, his head surmounted with a bright yellow turban, undulating a yak's tail over his master, to prevent mosquitos from sounding in his ears their little note of warning, or fixing their fine taper antennæ into those rich conduits through which the currents of life meander in ten thousand winding avenues to and from the heart. Beside this man stood another attendant, somewhat differently clad as to colour, but precisely similar in costume, waving a punka beside the Chan, in

order to break the stagnation of the hot air of noon, in a shade where the thermometer would stand at ninety-eight degrees.

Lody was seated upon a carpet from the valued looms of Persia; beside him stood a goblet of Shiraz wine, and at his right hand a match-lock, its stock richly inlaid with gold. From the eaves of the veranda fell a silk awning, which was lowered when the sun slanted its level rays above the horizon in its early rising, or flooded the plain with its departing glories, ere it sank behind the broad ocean. This awning was brocaded with the precious metals from the celebrated bazaars of Ispahan, unrivalled throughout the East for the richness of its tissues. The walls were panelled with polished steel, which multiplied the reflection of every object near, and seemed to give an almost interminable space to the balconies by which the palace was surrounded. Arms, burnished with a care that showed how highly they were prized, hung from the pilasters which supported the projecting roof of the veranda, and various emblems of war were distributed around with a profusion and an attention to effect, which sufficiently evinced how familiar the lord of this palace was with that bane of peace

upon earth of which it has been too truly said, and but too little heeded, that

> War's a game
> Which, were their subjects wise, kings would not play at.

Everything around the palace of Chan Lody attested his predilection for this most desperate game of chance that man can engage in. He was one of the greatest warriors of his day. Being a descendant of the imperial family of Lody, he felt anxious to maintain the dignity of his house: but though glory was the fierce aim of his ambition, he never tarnished it by an act of dishonour. He was indeed an ambitious prince, but a generous soldier and a virtuous man.

Whilst he sat drawing through the golden mouthpiece of his beautifully embossed hookah the exhalations of a richly aromatic chillam, a stranger was announced desiring to have an interview with the Chan.

"Admit him," said Lody to the attendant, who instantly withdrew, and shortly returned ushering in the stranger.

The latter appeared to be a youth of noble deportment and gallant bearing. He was evidently in the dawn of manhood, but had all its best attri-

butes legibly recorded on his clear open brow and small decided features. Lody's eye relaxed into a faint yet bright smile as he bent it upon the noble stranger, whose salutation he returned with much courtesy.

"Chan Lody," said the youth, "you are aware that the Emperor Jehangire is in paradise; a usurper, aided by the influence of the Sultana, is upon the throne; the Sultan, Shah Jehan, now lawful sovereign of the Moguls, is on his march to vindicate his rights and seize the imperial sceptre: his route lies through your territories, through which he demands your permission to pass, and a safe conduct. What answer shall I return, Chan Lody?"

Lody's brow became suddenly overcast; and he said bitterly, "Princes who solicit favours should know how to bestow them."

"Is this the answer I am to return to the Sultan?"

"No: when you have refreshed yourself with food and rest, I will give you my answer at length."

"Is it hostile or peaceable?"

"You will know when you receive it."

"Chan Lody, I accept not the hospitality of an

enemy. If you deny what I come to solicit, I quit your presence with a full and unqualified defiance; if you grant it, I will eat your salt with joy, and the Prophet's blessing will requite you for the boon."

"Young man, your defiance or your blessing is to me alike indifferent. I have no desire that you should either eat my salt or make my palace a place of rest. Bear my answer to your master. I grant no safe conduct to rebels. A rebellious son cannot be a just prince. I would rather see the enemy at my gates, than Shah Jehan Emperor of the Moguls."

"A time may come when Chan Lody will be glad to forget that he has dared to insult his sovereign.

Saying this, the youthful messenger turned upon his heel and was about to depart, but the Chan ordered him to be detained; then, by way of adding contempt to his refusal, the indignant Omrah commanded the dress of a menial to be brought, and filling a small bag with rupees, he charged the Sultan's envoy to deliver them, together with an old lean horse, to his master.

The young man departed: and meeting a shepherd at some short distance from Burhampoor.

gave him the dress, the rupees, and the horse, bidding him deliver them to Chan Lody with this message:—that Prince Morad, son of the emperor Shah Jehan, returned the gift designed for his royal parent, as the giver might one day need a beggar's boon, since adversity was generally the lot of insolent nobles and disaffected subjects.

The shepherd, not considering himself bound by the laws of honour, and not being harassed by delicate scruples, appropriated the dress, rupees, and horse to his own purposes. What to one man was an offence, was to another a blessing.

Morad, galled by the indignity which had been so wantonly offered to him, proceeded towards his father's encampment. On emerging from a thick forest upon an extensive plain, he saw a party at some distance advancing in the direction of the jungle. As they approached nearer, he perceived a palankeen accompanied by a numerous train of attendants. Before they had reached the path which led into the forest, a wild elephant started from the thicket, and rushed with a short shrill cry towards the approaching cavalcade. Terrified at the sight of such a huge foe, the attendants dispersed; and

the bearers, laying down the palankeen, fled in different directions. The elephant advanced with an aspect of deadly hostility towards the palankeen, which, as Morad perceived, from the curtains being closely drawn round it, contained a female; and, from the number of her attendants, it was evident that she was a female of rank. Unappalled by the danger, he darted forward; and being nearer the palankeen than the elephant, came up with the animal before it could reach its victim. Striking it with his sword just above the knee joint of the right leg behind, he at once disabled it, and diverted its attention from the object of attack. The huge creature immediately uttered a scream of agony, and turned upon Morad; but unable to use the wounded limb, its movements were slow and embarrassed: Morad, therefore, had no difficulty in evading its assault by actively running behind it, and seizing his opportunity, he inflicted another wound on the other hind leg, which rendered the elephant unable to do mischief. It rolled upon the earth: and Morad calling upon his attendants to approach, took a matchlock, and placing the muzzle to the ear of the huge beast, sent a bullet into its brain. The animal uttered a short loud roar, and died.

Meanwhile the lady had quitted her palankeen, and stood before her youthful deliverer in the beaming lustre of her beauty. Her countenance was calm and unruffled, and her dark eye was fixed upon the dead elephant with an expression of resolute satisfaction that showed how little she had been disturbed by the past danger. She made a graceful salaam of acknowledgment; and, beckoning with an air of haughty command to her attendants, thanked her deliverer with a somewhat lofty courtesy, and, inviting him to return to her father's palace, entered her palankeen. Morad, who had been struck with her beauty, learned in few words that she was the daughter of Chan Lody. Notwithstanding the late discourtesies which had passed between them, and the insult offered to his parent, he determined to escort the lovely girl to her father's dwelling. He had been charmed with the beautiful countenance and magnanimous bearing of the Chan's daughter, and now felt really anxious that a better understanding should exist between her parent and his own. He therefore returned with her to Burhampoor. On reaching Chan Lody's palace, the lady wished Morad to enter, in order that he might receive her father's acknowledgments for the signal service he had rendered his child.

"Lady," said the prince, "I am the son of Shah Jehan, to whom your father refuses a passage through his dominions. I cannot again enter the presence of one who has denied my parent and his sovereign so poor a boon."

"Life, prince, is a valueless possession, unless we hold it on those terms which make it worth the prizing; and, believe me, I would rather mine were forfeited than be indebted for its preservation to a scion of Chan Lody's foe. You, however, have conferred the obligation nobly, at the risk of your own; my courtesy, therefore, is the least I can offer you. Enter, and I will take upon me to secure for you my father's hospitality, who could not but be happy to entertain his daughter's deliverer."

"I should be sorry to test the hospitality of a man whose heart would be at variance with his urbanity. For what I have done, the approbation of my own conscience is a sufficient reward; and your courtesy has cancelled whatever obligation you may have considered yourself under to me. But perhaps you will do me the favour to tell Chan Lody that he is indebted for his daughter's life to the son of Shah Jehan."

The lovely Jahanira a moment bent her piercing eye upon Morad, and said, in a tone of proud

dignity, "Our acquaintance then will end here, since you refuse the hospitality which has been at least courteously offered; but I am your debtor, and shall, I trust, live to cancel my debt. Farewell!"

She entered the palace, and Morad retraced his steps. As he pursued his journey towards his father's tents, he could not help reflecting on the sublime beauty of Chan Lody's daughter. She was evidently a woman of a lofty and indomitable spirit. Her parent's dauntless soul beamed in her full black eyes, and her small budding mouth, the lips of which met each other with a firm compression that seemed to mock the tenderness of a more gentle contact, showed there was a high resolve within her which nothing short of death could subdue. Morad was young and ardent. His whole soul quivered like a sunbeam at the bare thought of an enterprise that should cast a halo of glory around it; and his bosom glowed with germane sympathy, where he beheld any symptom of feeling congenial with his own. The stern refusal of Chan Lody had roused his indignation; the proud spirit of his daughter had won him to a gentler mood, and her beauty ratified what her lofty bearing had expressed.

When he entered his father's presence, he reported the Omrah's refusal, but withheld the indignities with which it had been accompanied. Shah Jehan was mortified and indignant at this issue of his embassy to the haughty noble of Burhampoor; and, breaking up his camp, he proceeded to the capital by another route.

CHAPTER II.

WITHIN a few weeks after the events related in the preceding chapter, Chan Lody was apprised of Shah Jehan's accession to the imperial throne. He was too powerful an Omrah not to be conciliated; the Emperor, therefore, despatched his son Morad with a message to invite Lody to visit the capital, promising him oblivion of all past indignities, with assurances of future favour. The Chan, trusting to the dignity of his own character, and his influence among the nobles, who honoured him as a man of lofty courage and impregnable integrity, consented at once to repair to Agra with his family, considering that his presence at the seat of government might be of some advantage to the state, as he was determined to watch with jealous scrutiny the motions of the reigning sovereign, to whose accession he had always been vehemently hostile. He, however, received Morad with courteous hospitality, as the saviour of his daughter's life; and the young prince, remem-

bering the impression which the lovely Jahanira had made upon him, offered himself to the father as her suitor. This was an alliance not at all coveted by Chan Lody, who, though he was by no means wanting in ambition, bore nevertheless too great an antipathy to the reigning Emperor to be desirous of a family connexion with him.

"My daughter," said he to Morad, "is the person most concerned in this matter. You must consult her. She knows my wishes and her own. Whatever her choice may be, I shall not obstruct it. When you have gained her consent, I shall not withhold mine."

Morad obtained an interview, and made his proposals. Jahanira paused, and surveyed him with a calm countenance, yet every feature radiant with that mind of which they were all most eloquent interpreters. After an earnest, but still respectful, scrutiny, she replied, "Prince, you are of noble birth, and therefore an alliance with you could not dishonour me; you are of a manly and agreeable person; you have the reputation of being brave, generous, just, and, in short, of possessing all the best qualities that belong to great and good men; personally, therefore, I cannot object to you as the disposer of my future life. Moreover, you have

saved that life; gratitude, consequently, would induce me to accede to any honourable proposal which you could make me: but my father and yours bear a deep enmity against each other, and this is an impassable bar to such an alliance as you seek between the house of Timour and that of Lody."

Morad was mortified at this rejection, and returned to Agra with the poison of disappointment rankling in his bosom. He kept the matter secret from his royal parent, who, he knew, would have felt the greatest indignation at his having made such a proposal to the daughter of a man who had treated him with offensive indignity.

Shortly after this, Chan Lody arrived with his family at Agra, and took up his abode in a large house surrounded by strong and lofty walls, not far from the palace. A few days after his arrival, he appeared at court, attended by his two sons. He was received by the Emperor with constrained courtesy, which satisfied him that the royal forgiveness so solemnly pledged to him was hollow and unsound. He was obliged to perform certain ceremonies which he considered not consistent with his rank and influence in the state; but, seeing the impolicy of resistance at that

moment, he patiently submitted to the indignity, though he clearly perceived that it was meant as a tacit retaliation. His son Azmut, a fine spirited youth of sixteen, followed his father into the hall of audience. The usher Perist, keeping him prostrate before the sovereign longer than the customary ceremony required, Azmut started from the ground, sprang upon his feet, and was about to turn his back upon the royal presence when Perist struck him smartly upon the head with his rod, and ordered him, in a peremptory tone, again to prostrate himself. The boy's spirit was kindled: with sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks he drew his sword, and made a stroke at the usher's head, which would have proved fatal, had not his weapon been struck down by some of the guards, who, on state occasions, were always in attendance in the courts of Mogul potentates.

Lody, suspecting that his life was aimed at, drew his dagger; and his two sons, placing themselves on either side of their father, with their weapons bared, produced a scene of general consternation. Many of the Omrahs unsheathed their swords, but the known valour of Chan Lody kept them in awe. The Emperor leaped from his throne, and ordered the refractory noble to be seized, together with

his sons. One of the mace-bearers, who happened to be near Azmut, laid hold of him, but the youth instantly buried a crease in his throat. The confusion increased. Two Omrahs fell beneath the arm of Chan Lody, who, rushing from the presence, followed by his sons, sought refuge in his own house, and ordered the gates to be instantly closed. He was proclaimed a rebel, and orders issued for his immediate apprehension; but the house to which he had repaired was so strongly fortified, that the fulfilment of the royal mandate was anything but an easy matter.

The Emperor's rage was now at its height; all his former hostility revived in full force, and he determined that the refractory Omrah should pay the extreme penalty of his rashness. He commanded Morad to besiege him in his castle. The latter, though he had scarcely recovered from the mortification to which he had been subjected by the beautiful but haughty daughter of the refractory noble, nevertheless undertook the command with some reluctance; respecting the virtues of the man whom, though he certainly did not love, he nevertheless could not despise.

The house was invested; and the rebel, as Chan Lody was pronounced to be, summoned to surrender.

He returned an answer of defiance. In reply to Morad's summons, he appeared with his sons and daughter upon the walls, and said, pointing to the latter, "You shall receive our answer from the lips of a woman, but that woman the daughter of Chan Lody."—"Prince Morad," said Jahanira, advancing to the very edge of the wall, "the brave never succumb to tyranny. Life is really only enjoyed by the free; and tyrants grant not liberty when they can exercise their power upon those who do not acknowledge it. We are resolved never to yield, Prince Morad; and even if your legions should overwhelm us, I need not remind you that the brave have a certain refuge in death."

The siege was pursued by Morad with such vigour for several days, that it was evident the besieged must shortly capitulate. Lody was embarrassed. He saw that there remained only one course—to cut his way through the enemy, and escape to Malwa. Desperate as the attempt was, he resolved to make it on the following morning. His sons and daughter determined to accompany him in his perilous flight. He communicated his intention to his women and the various members of his family, most of whom, he said, he

must leave to the imperial mercy. Tears and groans followed the communication, but there was no alternative betwixt death and captivity. He endeavoured to persuade his women that they, at least, would be treated with clemency. They answered him with renewed tears. He turned from them in an agony of grief; but his determination was taken, and, retiring to his apartment, he gave vent to the overflow of his feelings. Calling his three sons, he arranged with them the time for the desperate sally which was to be made on the following morning. His daughter, whom he loved as a son, and perfectly adored for the elevated heroism of her character, was present at this arrangement, and they finally separated for the night.

Lody could not sleep, and quitted his chamber to break the gloomy train of his thoughts. He passed into a large court, which was flanked by the women's apartments. The night was dark, the sky overcast, and the whole aspect of nature seemed to suit the gloomy habit of his soul. The dew fell heavily, but it cooled his fevered brow. As he passed by the apartments of his women, he heard groans as of persons in agony. He stopped to listen—they were repeated; there could be no

mistaking the sound. His heart throbbed audibly. He entered—listened—all was still; every light had been extinguished. He passed through the different chambers, but there was no sound. He called upon several, who were wont to answer his summons with a ready alacrity; there was no reply. What could be the cause? Horrible, but indefinite, suspicions crowded upon his mind. He at length entered into an inner apartment, and, stumbling over some obstacle, fell upon his face. He arose, and, in a small antechamber, perceived a light glimmering faintly behind a curtain. Upon removing the drapery, he perceived the dead body of a female favourite. He raised the lamp from the floor, and saw that his hands and dress were stained with blood. Returning to the chamber in which he had fallen, a sad revelation of the mystery of the groans and succeeding silence was made horribly manifest. The floor was covered with gore, which still feebly welled from the bosoms of several women, in whom life was yet scarcely extinct. Every member of his harem was dead, or in the last pangs of dissolution. They had considered suicide as the preferable alternative to falling into the power of those who were enemies to Chan Lody.

The sight was overpowering. The sacrifice had been noble, but it poured a tide of agony through the bosom of him for whom it was so unanimously made. The mothers of his children lay dead among the lifeless forms before him. He looked upon them, and, after the first terrible burst of grief had subsided, he uttered a vow of deep and implacable revenge. Summoning his children, they joined in his vow. Jahanira embraced her mother's corpse, and supplicated vengeance upon the heads of those who had forced her to self-immolation.

Tears rolled over Lody's cheeks, but he dashed them off, and called upon his children to assist him in performing the obsequies of the dead. His eye dilated with an expression of energetic resolution as he raised the bodies from their gory beds, wrapped them in clean linen, and, assisted by his sons, carried them into a garden beyond the court, where, having hastily dug a large hole, they buried them in one common grave. There was no prayer uttered—no ritual form observed—but the fervent aspiration of earnest and sorrowful hearts went up as a memorial to God.

As they quitted the garden, the young dawn began to glimmer in the east. Lody summoned

his followers; though few, they were determined. It was a desperate cast, but the late scene had given an impulse to the spirits of each and all. The danger of the enterprise vanished before the daring which impelled him, and those who were so dear to him, to brave the peril, and either secure their escape or perish.

On a sudden, the gates were thrown open. Lody rushed out, followed by his three sons and his daughter, who spurred their horses towards the city walls. The imperial troops were struck with awe at the daring of this small but determined band. They swept onward like the whirlwind; all who opposed them were cut down The light was still so imperfect, that the imperial troops, being suddenly roused by this unexpected assault, were confused, and fell before the swords of Lody and his followers, who finally succeeded in cutting their way through their foes, and escaping by the city gates.

CHAPTER III.

The conflict between the followers of Chan Lody and the imperial troops had been short but desperate. Many of the latter, taken by surprise, were slain, whilst scarcely one of the assailants lost his life. Jahanira, upon a small roan Arab, rode immediately behind her father, through the thickest of the enemy. She dyed her virgin sword in blood. Just as she had reached the gate, Morad intercepted her passage.

" You have no further chance of escape," he cried, attempting to seize the reins of her steed; but she, striking her heels into the animal's side, caused it to rear, and thus prevented Morad's intention.

By this time the whole of her party had escaped, and she alone remained within the walls. A soldier now grasping the reins of her horse, she instantly severed his arm at the wrist with a single stroke of her keen Damascus sabre. The man, exasperated, urged a comrade to cut her

down. The latter sprang forward, but she met him as he advanced, and buried her weapon in his throat. Morad commanded that the troops should retire, and urged his charger towards Jahanira.

"Lady, you are our prisoner."

"Never!" cried Jahanira, drawing a dagger. "I will not survive captivity. Open yonder gates, and allow me to follow my father, or I will leave you only my body for the gratification of your revenge. You shall never take me alive!"

"Nay, this intemperance ill befits a daughter of the illustrious house of Lody. None but cowards die to escape the shocks of destiny."

"And none but cowards submit to the caprices of tyrants. You once preserved my life; but if you intend to inthral the life you saved, all obligation is cancelled between us, and I now dare you to mortal combat; for, woman as I am, you shall find me no contemptible competitor."

She spurred her Arab towards Morad and made a stroke at his head; but he suddenly reined back his horse and avoided the blow, which fell upon the animal's neck. It plunged violently, and the prince had great difficulty in evading the fierce onset of his beautiful antagonist, who at

length wounded him in the arm; and seeing several horsemen approach to the aid of their general, she urged her little roan charger towards the gate. Morad, charmed with her heroism, ordered it to be opened; when, bounding through the portal with the swiftness of an arrow, she soon joined her father and brothers about four leagues from the city.

The Emperor having been roused by the sudden shouts of the fugitive and his followers, as they made their unexpected eruption from the castle, started from his bed, and seizing a sword, sent messengers to ascertain the cause; apprehending an insurrection of the citizens in favour of Chan Lody, who was extremely popular among them. On ascertaining that the Omrah had escaped, he despatched a large body of troops, headed by Perist, the usher, who was accompanied by several other nobles of distinction, and ordered to bring back the fugitives to the city either dead or alive.

Perist, eager to punish Azmut for the attack made upon him by that young warrior in the Emperor's presence, readily undertook the command, and promised that before the waning of another moon the heads of his master's enemies should either be blackening on the walls of Agra, or their

bodies bound in chains within the state prisons. This empty boast satisfied Shah Jehan, who well knew the usher's hostility to the family of Lody, which he would have been willing to exterminate, even at the sacrifice of his own life.

Perist was a Calmuc Tartar, of amazing power, of body and no less intrepidity of spirit, who had raised himself to distinction in the imperial army by his gigantic strength and desperate valour. He had risen from a low station in the army to one of high distinction in the state, and this had emboldened him to seek an alliance that should perpetuate his name. The lovely Jahanira had long been the theme of public panegyric, and the reputation of her beauty, together with her illustrious descent, made him desire to become united with this distinguished maiden.

Without having seen the object of his ambitious aspiring, but relying upon the reports of her high qualities, he sent his proposals, which were rejected with scorn. This roused the malignity of the Tartar. To be contemned by a woman was an injury never to be forgotten; and he meditated a distant but signal revenge. He expected that his treatment of the fiery young Azmut would rouse the indignation of his family, and most probably

excite them to acts of violence. It had happened precisely as he had foreseen, and he now gladly seized the opportunity of following up to its issue the plan of retribution which he had so warily laid. He was not a man to let his resolution lie in abeyance until chance concurred to elicit the desired result; but he had that energy of malice which tries every hazard, however desperate, to realize the consummation of its most atrocious purposes.

Lody had well weighed the chances of pursuit; and knowing the fierce hostility with which the usher regarded him, had calculated the probability of being followed by his ancient foe. He urged forward his little band for fifteen leagues without halting, and was then stopped by a river. It was broad and rapid, and so swollen by recent rains, that to cross it seemed utterly impracticable. It flowed onward in a wide turbid stream, broken every now and then into small whirling eddies by the rapidity of its progress, and thus became so agitated, that there appeared no chance of stemming its tumultuous current. There was not a boat to be seen; all had been carried down the stream by the impetuosity of the torrent: and a wooden bridge was swept away by the extraordi-

nary pressure of its augmented waters, which in several places overflowed their banks and inundated the country; except upon the higher grounds, to a distance of several miles.

This was a melancholy impediment. Here was a check which bid fair to frustrate their escape, but there was no choice; and with a foreboding heart Chan Lody and his faithful adherents encamped for the night upon the banks of the river. He threw himself upon a rug to snatch a short repose after the bodily fatigue and mental excitement of the last twenty-four hours. His reflections were sad and harassing. The scene of the past night recurred to his mind with sickening vividness, and painful recollections swept over it with the might and suddenness of the whirlwind. The perilous situation in which he stood, perplexed and agitated him. He had but a few followers to oppose to the large body of troops which he was certain would be sent against him. The swollen state of the river forbad the possibility of flight, and the small number of his adherents banished every chance of successful resistance. For himself he entertained no apprehensions; but when he thought of his children, an involuntary pang, which he could not repress, shook his frame.

In proportion, however, as his reflections magnified the dangers by which he was surrounded, his spirit rose, and finally settled into a determination of resistance which nothing could disturb. Prepared to meet the worst emergencies of the morrow, he at length sank into a profound slumber, which was increased by that reaction of repose after excitement, which invariably follows the tension of mind produced by extreme mental disturbance.

He awoke with the dawn: and upon quitting his tent was informed that the imperial troops were in full march towards him. He immediately summoned his sons and daughter; and representing the utter impossibility of escape, asked them if they would wish to throw themselves upon the enemy's clemency?—that for himself he was resolved to die in arms. Hussein, the eldest son, swore he would follow his father's fortune, and perish rather than fall into the hands of a conqueror. Azmut made the same solemn vow.

"And you, my child," said Chan Lody, addressing his daughter, "what reason is there that you should not live to form an alliance, which might perpetuate the race of Lody, with a man, perhaps, that would vindicate thy father's wrong?"

"Because," replied the noble girl, throwing herself upon her parent's bosom, "I am from a stock that has ever preferred death to captivity. There is no sex in soul; and I feel mine to be as capable of those deeds which will excite unborn ages to noble emulation as they who exclusively claim the privilege of performing them. I am resolved to perish with the enemy's blood upon my sword, and will dye this dagger with my own rather than accept the clemency of tyrants."

The father embraced her: and having summoned his small but resolute band, declared to them his determination of dying in arms rather than yield to the approaching foe. This resolution was hailed with a cheer, and the troops prepared for action. There was a pass between two hills in their rear which opened into a narrow plain. Of this pass Chan Lody took possession, and he had scarcely disposed his order of battle, when the van of the imperialists appeared advancing along a rising valley. His position was a very strong one, being accessible only in front; the river, which so effectually cut off his retreat, as effectually covering his rear.

The imperial army amounted to upwards of eight thousand men; Chan Lody's did not exceed

as many hundreds. The enemy advanced leisurely onward, and halted within about two furlongs from the pass where the fugitives were so advantageously posted. A message was immediately despatched to Chan Lody, summoning him to surrender. He returned a reply of haughty defiance, and the Emperor's troops advanced to the charge. They were so warmly received that, after a short but vigorous struggle, they were obliged to fall back. Though considerably dispirited by this repulse, relying upon their numbers, they again advanced to the charge with like success.

These attacks were several times repeated with a similar result, until evening terminated the conflict, when the imperialists retired within their camp on the slope of a neighbouring hill. They had suffered severely; upwards of twelve hundred men having been slain, and nearly double that number wounded. Chan Lody's band had likewise suffered severely. Not more than a hundred and fifty remained unhurt. Three hundred were killed, and many more desperately wounded; so that he had nothing more consolatory to look forward to than their utter extermination, as soon as the sanguinary conflict should be renewed.

It was a gloomy prospect. A council was held among the survivors, who unanimously declared their resolution to fight to the last extremity; but Hussein and Azmut both proposed that their father should attempt the river, and they would secure his retreat.

"My father," said Hussein, "you may still live to avenge your wrongs. Besides, you have been severely wounded in the action of to-day, and your death will therefore be rather a suicide than a sacrifice, if you expose yourself merely to court destruction. You cannot, in your present state, endure the exertion of another conflict. Try the river;—your steed is stout, and may bear you to the shore in safety;—we will cover your retreat."

"The danger is equal," replied Lody; "but it is more honourable to die on the field than in the river."

Still they urged his retreat. "But can I fly and leave my children? No! I will perish on this field. I will never leave my brave sons to meet an honourable death and live to become a mere man of sorrows."

It was at length agreed, after considerable difficulty, that Chan Lody and one of his sons and

daughter should try the river, and the other remain behind to keep the enemy in check until the fugitives had gained the opposite shore.

When this was determined, they separated for the night. With early dawn the brothers were at their posts. As the light was gradually stretching over the distant plain in a broad grey stream, a dispute arose between them which should attack the enemy. Whilst, however, the generous altercation was going on, Perist, who had struck Azmut in the Emperor's presence, appeared at the head of the imperialists.

"It is decided," said Azmut; "there is my enemy—especially and personally mine. Hussein, you would not interfere with your brother's privilege to redress his own wrongs. Fly with my father, and leave me to my revenge."

Saying this, he spurred his horse forward; and his father, joined by Hussein, plunged into the river.

CHAPTER IV.

Chan Lody and his son Hussein had great difficulty in stemming the rapid current. Their horses were carried a considerable distance down the stream, and almost exhausted before they reached the opposite bank; fortunately, the channel was so full that the water was on a level with the land. When they had made good their transit, they shouted to apprize the generous Azmut of their safety, whom, however, they did not see; for he was engaged in that perilous onset of destruction to which he had so heroically devoted himself

The father's distress was great when he perceived that Jahanira had not followed them. He concluded that, fearing to encounter the peril of crossing the river, she had resolved to throw herself upon the clemency of the conquerors; for the defeat of her brother and his small band was certain. Such a resolution, however, was so contrary to her nature that he rejected the suppo-

sition almost as soon as he had formed it, and came to the final conclusion that she had determined to share the fate of Azmut. The anxious father hoped, that, should they hear his shouts of safety, they would immediately fly from the unequal contest, and attempt the passage of the river, as he and his elder son had done with unexpected success.

He was not far from right in his judgment concerning Jahanira: she had remained with Azmut, resolved either to perish or escape with him. No sooner had Chan Lody and Hussein plunged into the stream than Azmut spurred towards the imperialists, who were advancing slowly towards the pass. Seeing him approach, Perist ordered his army to halt, determined to have the satisfaction of slaying him with his own arm. Jahanira had armed herself with a bow and arrows. Following her brother, she paused when she saw his foe singly advance to meet him. The hardy Calmuc, confiding in his own strength, awaited with a smile of anticipated triumph the coming onset of his impatient enemy.

Azmut was rejoiced to see the halt of the imperial army, as it would render secure the retreat of his father and brother, provided the current of the

river did not prove too strong for them. Being upon a light active horse, he passed the usher at speed, and striking at him in full career, inflicted a deep gash on his knee. The Tartar turned, and Azmut wheeling at the same moment, their horses met with a tremendous shock, and the light charger of the latter rolled upon the plain. Its rider was upon his feet in an instant. Perist spurred towards him, but he parried a furious stroke, at the same time springing actively on one side, as his huge adversary attempted to ride him down. His danger, however, was imminent, and the moment critical. Jahanira beheld the peril of her beloved brother. She placed an arrow upon the string of her bow. The Tartar had again advanced upon Azmut, and as he raised his heavy sabre to bury it in the body of his youthful opponent, a shaft, sped with unerring aim, entered his temple, and he dropped dead at his horse's feet.

Azmut saw from whence the succour came, waved his arm in token of acknowledgment, and retreated towards the pass; but being on foot, he was overtaken by a party of the enemy's cavalry before he could reach his followers. The latter, however, rushed forward to his rescue, and for some time a desperate struggle ensued;

it was short and decisive. Overwhelmed by numbers, the fugitives were cut off to a man. Azmut slew two Omrahs with his own hands, but was transfixed by a lance as he was in the act of bringing his sword upon the crest of a third. An arrow from the bow of his heroic sister entered the bosom of his destroyer, and she had the satisfaction of witnessing his death-pang while she beheld that of her brother.

Seeing that all was lost, and hearing her father's shouts, she spurred her horse towards the river, discharging several arrows in her flight at the pursuing squadron: the enemy expected that the water would arrest her flight, and therefore slackened their speed as they approached; but to their amazement she dashed fearlessly in, and pushed bravely for the opposite shore, upon which stood her father and only surviving brother.

The enemy halted upon the bank in amazement, not daring to attempt the passage. The turbid waters rolled rapidly on, foaming and hissing in their way, as they were occasionally interrupted in their course by the partial sinuosities of the channel. Her horse was slight, but full of fire, and pawed the turbulent stream with an impatient but resolute spirit. The undaunted girl was frequently sucked

down by the eddies, but she maintained her seat and rose above them with an intrepidity that amazed while it mortified her hostile spectators. Vexed that she should have eluded them, several archers discharged their arrows at her as she was struggling amidst the perilous element. One shaft hit her on the turban; this being saturated, repelled it; but such was the force with which the arrow had been urged, that the turban was struck from her head, exposing it to the cowardly aim of her incensed foes.

By this time she had passed the middle of the channel where the current was strongest, and thus somewhat abated the chances of perishing amidst the troubled waters. Her enemies still continuing to discharge their arrows, as if in derision of their impotent malice she raised herself in her stirrup, threw back her long raven hair which streamed around her like a fine sable fringe, and waved her arm, bidding them a mute defiance. Her father and brother cheered her from the shore, but her safety was still doubtful. Her horse was fast sinking. Its nose was scarcely perceptible above the agitated surface of the stream. There was but one resource —she flung herself from its back, and the noble animal almost immediately sank.

She was yet a considerable distance from the bank, and the current was still strong. She breasted it, however, with fearless energy, straining every nerve to reach the shore. The foe had ceased to impel their arrows, as she was by this time beyond the reach of anything like a certain aim. She flung her sandals from her feet as they embarrassed her movements, and in spite of the fierce rush of the stream, she rose above it and gradually advanced towards the bank. It was evident that she would not be able much longer to continue her exertions, and her anxious parent was beginning to entertain his doubts of her eventual escape, when she caught the branch of a tree which was just underneath the surface, and sustained herself until she had recovered her breath. Just below, the bank had given way and formed a sort of frith, in which she finally landed, and was welcomed by her father with a transport of emotion.

When she had sufficiently recovered, Chan Lody could no longer subdue his anxiety to know the fate of his brave son. "And Azmut," he said, "has become a sacrifice to his father's safety! for I see him not."

"Yes," said Jahanira solemnly, "he has met a

soldier's doom. He is gone to the inheritance of the brave."

"God is just; he did not perish unrevenged."

"No, the man who offered him an indignity in the imperial presence has paid the penalty of his daring. I slew him, father."

"My child!" the parent fell upon his daughter's neck, and wept.

"Azmut died with his sword in his hand, reeking with the slaughter of his enemies. His was a noble death,—how much better than an inglorious life!"

Of Chan Lody's followers, three only survived, —the whole had been slain, except five who had plunged into the river a short time before Jahanira. Two had perished in attempting the passage, and three had succeeded in gaining the shore. With this wretched remnant of his little army, he proceeded towards Malwa, halting for the night at a small village about ten leagues from the river. His misfortunes had been severe, but they rather tended to render him resolute than to subdue his unbending spirit. His march into this province was speedy, but sorrowful. The loss of Azmut was a bitter grief. He was the pride of his father's house;—a mere child in years, he had shown the

wisdom of the sage, and the skill in arms of an accomplished warrior. Chan Lody lived but to avenge his early and premature fate, and the idea of vengeance was a solace to his lacerated spirit.

When he reached Malwa, to the government of which he had been appointed by Shah Jehan, he began to levy troops, and soon found himself at the head of a small but well-disciplined force. His name was formidable throughout the empire, and the late events had obtained for him an almost universal sympathy. He was not, however, permitted to remain long unmolested. Within three weeks after he had crossed the river to avoid the imperial army, the waters had subsided, and his enemies having recruited their forces, advanced to Malwa. He met them in the field, but was defeated, and obliged to retire to the mountains, where he maintained a successful defence, until the monsoon obliged the enemy to retire. Lody had harassed them by frequent surprises, by cutting off their supplies, and by reducing them to such straits that they were finally obliged to leave him in undisturbed possession of the province, which the Emperor had placed under his government. They were glad at length to escape the difficulties which he raised around them.

The Emperor was extremely perplexed at Chan Lody's escape. He knew the abilities of that Omrah, and the estimation in which his principles and talents were almost universally held. So long as he lived, the Mogul throne was a contingency. Nothing but the death of Chan Lody could give security to the reign of Shah Jehan. With these impressions, the Emperor determined to destroy that noble, as a maxim of state policy; and therefore, so soon as the monsoon had passed, he despatched a numerous army to drive him from his stronghold in the mountains, and bring him to Agra, alive or dead.

The imperial general was a noble of distinguished reputation, and commanded a numerous and well-appointed army. He encamped within a day's march from the mountains to which Chan Lody had retired for security. Conscious of his numerical superiority, he affected to despise his enemy. On the evening after he had encamped, a nautch-girl entered his presence, soliciting permission to dance before him. Struck with her singular beauty, she was allowed to exhibit her professional skill in his presence after the evening meal. He did not long enjoy the exhibition of her evolutions. He was taken ill shortly after having swallowed a

copious draught of sherbet, and before the morning was a corpse. His mysterious death provoking inquiry, it was immediately ascertained that he had been poisoned. The sudden disappearance of the nautch-girl excited suspicion. She was nowhere to be found. The death of the imperial general soon reached Lody's ears, and all the mysterious circumstances attending it. "I can explain the mystery," said the Omrah's daughter; "I entered the hostile camp in disguise, and poison has removed a foe whose place will not be easily supplied."

The death of their general rendered the imperial army inactive for some time, and gave an opportunity to Lody to escape into the Deccan, where he had powerful friends.

For some time, through the talents of Chan Lody, the Nizam's troops baffled every attempt against his capital. According to his former policy, Lody had secured the passes of the mountains; and upon one occasion, rushing down upon Eradit, at the head of twelve thousand men, he defeated him with great slaughter, and obliged him to retire out of the province. This so exasperated Shah Jehan, that he suspended Eradit from the command, and put the army under that of his Vizier, whose reputation as a general considerably damped the ardour of the Nizam's forces. Lody still retained possession of the passes, from which every effort hitherto made to dislodge him had proved ineffectual.

Prince Morad accompanied the Vizier. His love for the heroic daughter of the refractory Omrah had not abated. Her beauty had at first forged a fetter round his heart, and her heroism riveted the chain.

One night, after a day of severe skirmishing with the enemy, Jahanira, who always followed her father to the field, had quitted her tent to breathe the fresh air of heaven. The night dews fell upon her burning brow and cooled her brain, which ached with the concurring excitement of bodily exertion and mental anxiety. She saw that

the arm of destiny was raised to smite. She wept. Her father's wrongs were not yet half avenged. That very day, the Nizam had withdrawn his forces, and abandoned his brave ally, with whom there remained only a few hundred followers, to contend with an army of above eighty thousand men. The Nizam had submitted to the Vizier, and Lody was left without a single friend. Jahanira perceiving that his determination to die in arms was shortly to be realised, resolved to go with him to the peace of a less distracted world.

Absorbed in the intensity of these reflections, she had wandered beyond the boundary of the camp. The night was still and balmy; fresh dews descended from the hills, and moistened her blanched cheek, which was fanned by the passing breeze. The distant cries of jackals interrupted at intervals the repose of this solemn scene; and the lulling gush of a stream, which flowed through a neighbouring ravine, suited the melancholy temper of her spirit at this hour of darkness and of silence. She strolled onward thoughtfully. Raising her eyes to the side of a hill, where a narrow path diverged from the main road, she saw a figure emerge from a clump of trees, and stand in complete relief against the sky. She drew her dagger,

and, approaching cautiously, cried, "Who's there?" at the same moment springing forward, and standing with her drawn crease within a few yards of the intruder.

"Jahanira!" exclaimed a voice, which she instantly recognised to be that of Morad.

"Why this intrusion, prince? Are you come a spy upon our path? Can the foe so fear to approach the bayed lion, that he is obliged to resort to stratagem? Locusts, prince, will desolate a country by the mere force of numbers: your armies may likewise overwhelm Chan Lody, but you will not subdue him."

"I come not as a spy, lady," replied Morad earnestly, "but to renew my vows of eternal attachment to the noblest woman in the universe. If the lovely Jahanira will accept an alliance with the family of Timour, and become the wife of Morad, her father may be restored to his honours and influence in the state. All that is past will be forgotten."

"Nay, prince, what is past can never be forgotten. The death of Azmut, and the degradation of my parent, are scored with a fiery brand upon my heart, and cannot be erased. I have seen my brother slain—I have seen my father wronged.

In this world, but one object remains to me and mine—revenge! We are a doomed family, Prince Morad; we shall perish together. There is no alternative between that and yielding our allegiance to a tyrant. The latter we shall never do; the former must be our destiny. We are prepared; but they who die desperately, with weapons in their hands, are to be dreaded. Let the oppressor tremble."

"Jahanira! why should this be? I come to offer you freedom—to raise you to a dignity which you were born to adorn."

"Freedom! Prince Morad? I have been free—I am free—I will be free—and there is no dignity higher than being the daughter of Chan Lody. Retire! this secret communication neither befits you to make, nor me to encourage. Why skulk under the cover of night to an enemy's tents? Leave me, or I shall be compelled to treat you as a foe."

"I came under the cover of night to avoid suspicion of treachery in the imperial camp. I have incurred some hazard, lady, in coming hither to declare myself, to release you and your family from certain death, and to offer you the heart of an Emperor's son."

"Which I reject, prince; for, however I might respect the son of a tyrant, I never could wed him. My resolve is immutable. To-morrow, in the battle, remember that the daughter of Chan Lody has dared to reject the son of Shah Jehan!"

Morad was in the act of speaking, when she turned from him, waved her hand with an air of haughty courtesy, and ascended the hill towards her tent. Upon reaching it, she threw herself on her couch, agitated by a tumult of conflicting feelings. Prince Morad's affection for her was not to be thought of without emotion; she had rejected him—even with bitterness, yet he had twice saved her life; but every other feeling was merged in her filial obligations.

"He is the son of my parent's worst foe," she said mentally; "I am therefore bound to withhold all feelings towards him but those of enmity."

Morad was deeply mortified at the issue of his adventure. He had run the risk of incurring a base suspicion from his own party, and of being seized as a spy by the enemy, only to meet a cold and bitter repulse. He could not, however, withhold his admiration from the woman whose affections he sought to win, though she had met

his advances with uniform haughtiness. He saw that hers was, in truth, as she had characterized it, a doomed family, and it grieved him that he could not rescue them from destruction.

Chan Lody's followers were reduced to a mere troop; and, however strong his position, it was evident that he must eventually yield to such an immense majority of numbers. Morad dreaded the approaching onslaught. By day-break, the pass was to be stormed by the imperial army, and there could be no doubt of the issue. He would have laid down his life to rescue Jahanira from the impending doom, but this could not be.

Day dawned: the pass was attacked, and the imperialists were repulsed with great slaughter. Jahanira appeared among the combatants, fighting with a hero's energy. The pass was again attacked; repulse followed as before, with immense loss on the side of the assailants. Lody's small band, however, was diminished by every fresh attack, and he was at length obliged to abandon the pass, with only a few followers. Descending into the plain on the other side of the mountain, he resolved there to await the coming of the foe, and fulfil his resolution of dying in arms. He was not allowed long to pause after he had quitted the hills. The

imperial troops appeared in sight, and he prepared himself for the sacrifice.

Summoning his brave adherents, now amounting only to thirty-two, in which number was included his son Hussein and his daughter Jahanira, he addressed them with much earnestness, suggesting that they would seek their own safety in flight, and leave him to die alone by the hand of an implacable enemy. When he had concluded his pathetic address, there was a general murmur of sorrow. Not a man would stir. All expressed their determination to die in arms with their beloved leader. "Then be it so," said Lody; "our enemies shall still find that a few valiant men are formidable even to the last, and their destruction a dear-bought triumph."

The imperialists advanced in a large body towards the devoted band, who suffered them to approach within a hundred paces, when they discharged their matchlocks, which, being directed with deadly aim, did signal execution. The moment after the discharge, veiled for a moment by the smoke, Jahanira spurred her horse towards the advancing host. As she rode, she fixed an arrow in the string of her bow, and discharged it at the officer who led the detachment. It struck upon a

small conical buckler with which he was armed, and the reed quivered as the head of the shaft pierced the tough buffalo hide that covered it. At this moment a ball from a matchlock entered the heroine's breast. She fell from her horse. The blood trickled from the wound. Morad rushed forward to raise her. She opened her languid eyes as he lifted her to his knee, fixed them on him with a look of stern despair, heaved a deep-felt sigh, and fell upon his shoulder—dead.

Chan Lody saw what passed. He gave the word to advance. His followers spurred their horses onward, and in a few moments came in contact with their foes. The onset was short but desperate. Hussein was struck to the earth by a stroke from Morad's sword, who felt no tender mercy for the brother of her whom he would have saved at the sacrifice of his own life. Her death had roused the fiercer energies of his spirit. Hussein fell beneath his arm.

The valour of Chan Lody's followers astonished their enemies. They scattered death and dismay around them. Chan Lody slew no less than six officers with his own hand. He was at length disabled by a sabre-cut on the shoulder; he dropped his sword, and was instantly surrounded and slain.

He died with his eyes fixed upon the broad heavens—a smile was on his lips—the left arm grasped a dagger. His adherents fought to the last man—not one survived; but the victors purchased a dear victory—the death of Chan Lody was signally avenged.

Historical Summary.

Hegira 1068. Aurungzebe ascended the imperial throne of the Moguls. He was alarmed by the approach of his nephew Soliman Sheko, who was finally deserted by his army, and obliged to take refuge in Serinagur. Soliman despatched a messenger to his father Dara, with the news of his ill-fortune. Dara, distressed at his son's misfortunes and his own, retreated from the banks of the Suttulege, on which he was encamped, and shortly after retired to Lahore, whence he was obliged to fly before the imperial army. Several of his nobles, perceiving his desperate circumstances, submitted to Aurungzebe. The Vizier, Meer Jumla, having arrived at court, Aurungzebe marched to Moultan; but finding his presence necessary in the capital, immediately returned to prepare against the invasion of his brother Suja. — A.D. 1658.

Heg. 1069. Suja approached with a considerable army, but was met near Allahabad by the Emperor. In consequence of the treachery of Jesswint Singh, Suja was defeated with great slaughter; and taking flight, was pursued by the Emperor's son Mahomed, who followed him to Patna, whither he had fled in disguise. Upon the news of Suja's defeat, Dara retired to Bicker beyond the Indus. Having changed his course to Tatta, he crossed the desert, and after reaching Guzarat, gained over the governor to his interests. He here contrived to raise an army, and — 1659.

A.D. 1659. marched towards Agra; but was deceived by Jesswint Singh, who had promised to join him with a numerous body of forces, but treacherously deserted Dara, and joined Aurungzebe. Dara fortified himself in Ajmere. Hither the Emperor marched and offered him battle, and deceived his unfortunate brother by a stratagem; after which he routed his army, and reduced him to the most pitiable distress. Dara fled to the desert accompanied by his wife, who died under circumstances of dreadful privation on the march. The unhappy prince in his extremity sought the protection of Jihon Chan, an Omrah of great power, whose life had been twice saved during the sovereignty of Shah Jehan through the influence of Dara; Jihon delivered him into the hands of the conqueror; he was paraded with every mark of ignominy through Delhi, confined in a neighbouring village, and eventually put to death by order of Aurungzebe. Suja took the field after the death of his brother Dara, and was joined by the Emperor's son Mahomed, who had conceived a passion for one of his daughters. Suja was finally defeated by the Vizier Jumla, and the prince Mahomed detached from him by the artifices of his father, who ordered the unfortunate Suja to be seized and imprisoned.

1660. *Heg.* 1070. Suja was obliged to take refuge in Arracan, where he was murdered, and his family reduced to the greatest extremity.

1661. Heg. 1071. Soliman, the son of Dara, was seized through the artifices of Aurungzebe, and sent to Delhi. He was imprisoned in the fortress of Gualior, and, like his unfortunate father, shortly after murdered. During this year a dreadful famine raged throughout the empire.

Heg. 1072. The imperial general, Shaista Chan, took one of Sevajee's hill-forts, by flying a kite which concealed a blind match over the fort just at the moment the garrison were taking powder from the magazine. The kite was allowed to drop upon the powder, which was kindled by the match, and an explosion took place; the greater part of the fort was thrown down, and nearly the whole garrison buried in the ruins. A.D. 1662.

Heg. 1073. An attempt was made by the Marajah to assassinate Shaista Chan, who escaped with the loss of three fingers; but his son was slain. 1663.

Heg. 1074. Aurungzebe fell sick, and his son Shah Allum began to intrigue for the throne; but his efforts were foiled by the Emperor's unexpected recovery. Shah Allum was appointed to a command in the Deccan, in order to remove him from the capital. 1664.

Heg. 1075. A dangerous insurrection broke out in Guzarat, and was quelled with difficulty. This year was distinguished by the death of Jumla, who had been appointed to the government of Bengal. Jumla was a man of great talent, having risen from a very low station to the highest offices in the state. He was much esteemed by Aurungzebe for his abilities, but still more dreaded than esteemed. During this year also there was an insurrection of Fakeers, who, under the influence of a very wealthy old woman, committed dreadful ravages, and marched to the number of twenty thousand towards the capital. Their march was marked by the most horrible cruelties. They totally defeated the imperial troops commanded by the collector of the revenue. At length the Emperor subdued them with their own weapons: employing the juggles of pretended enchantment, the insurrection 1665.

was quelled, but not until almost every one of the enthusiasts had been slain.

A.D. 1666. Heg. 1076. This year was remarkable for the death of Shah Jehan, and the capture of Sevajee, chief of the Mahrattas, who from the seventeenth year of his age had been pursuing a career of success almost unparalleled in the history of potentates. From commanding a small band of mountain robbers, he had raised himself to be the leader of a formidable army, with which he awed the surrounding provinces. He was at length taken prisoner by the imperial general, and confined at Delhi, whence he contrived to escape disguised in the dress of a man who had been admitted into his apartment with a basket of flowers. After enduring unparalleled hardships, he reached his native mountains, where he was crowned sovereign of the Mahrattas, who since that period have been gradually increasing in political importance, and are now the most numerous and influential of the native powers in India. They have produced several distinguished warriors, among whom the names of Scindia and Holcar will be remembered so long as history has its records, and man the capacity to peruse them.

The Revolt of the Fakeers.

The Rebolt of the Fakeers.

CHAPTER I.

About noon, under the scorching beams of a tropical sun, a young Mussulman was on his way toward the Mewat hills, accompanied by a party of fakeers. His hands were bound behind him with his turban, and he had nothing on his head but a silk skull-cap to resist the intense rays which shot from the cloudless heavens in an uninterrupted stream of glowing light. His black hair, which was long and bushy, fell over his shoulders and temples; thus supplying a natural protection against the influence of the solar fires, which were almost insupportable. He was urged onward by his companions at a rate which the excessive heat rendered extremely distressing, though to them it appeared mere matter of pastime. Accustomed as they were to undergo the severest bodily in-

flictions, what to him was positive torture was to them a relaxation from it.

Every one of his companions was perfectly naked, and each bore the marks of having submitted to the torturing process of some dreadful penance. Their limbs were sunken and fleshless, the skin shrivelled and discoloured by the severity of those torments to which their bodies had been exposed. Their nails protruded and curved into a point over the fingers and toes, like the claws of a beast of prey. Their hair, matted with the filthy accumulations of years, hung over the backs of these Mahomedan Nazarites, like the locks from a Medusa's head, and was frequently so thick as to shroud them in a capillary veil, revolting to more than one sense, and agreeable to none. They were armed with huge clubs, the heads of which were charged with iron. These they used with considerable dexterity, being in the habit of employing them in the jungles for the purpose of destroying small game, upon which they frequently feasted with a gluttonous zest that would have shamed even the Roman Apicius.

"Ay," said one, eyeing their prisoner with a look of Satanic triumph, "naked men know how to fight. Devotion is their shield, which all the

outcasts from Paradise shall never be able to pierce."

"I am in your power," replied the captive; "but beware how you exercise your momentary ascendency. Your foul revolt will not escape its due punishment: in spite of your devotion, you will suffer the penalty—torture me for a false prophet else. Success has turned your brains. The war waged by enthusiasm is like a sudden burst of the tempest, which crushes the oak in its impetuous sweep, but quickly passes away; the surrounding plain springs out into renewed luxuriance and beauty, and thus smiles at the impotence of the hurricane."

"Hold, blasphemer!" cried a huge gaunt devotee, the bones of whose joints were heard to clatter as he wielded his fleshless arms with the most extravagant gesticulations; "bend the knee to those holy men who have defeated the sons of darkness, and are about to place upon the throne of the Moguls a queen who shall close the dynasty of Timour, and fill the world with the children of the faithful,—for you are all aliens from the true stock."

The prisoner turned from this filthy saint with an expression of disgust, and allowed him to rail

at the Emperor and all his faithful subjects, till he foamed like a gored bull with the frantic energy of his vociferations.

They now entered upon a scene of desolation not to be witnessed without deep emotion, which naturally follows wherever the melancholy consciousness arises that a vast addition has been made to the sum of human misery. For leagues, as they proceeded onward, nothing was to be seen but deserted villages; the whole country having been laid waste, and bearing the appearance of "a land not inhabited." The jungles had been fired; and for miles the ashes left by the devouring element, and the charred trunks of trees, which had for centuries lifted their sturdy limbs amid the feebler growth of the forest, showed how terrific had been the conflagration. Not a shrub, not a blade of grass, not a single trace of vegetation, was anywhere visible; and as the stranger cast his eyes over the scene of devastation, he could not help expressing his indignation against the perpetrators of such wanton outrage.

"Ay," said one of the enthusiasts; "we take care not to provide forage for enemies; they who visit the stronghold of the fakeers, must make up their minds to take a hungry journey. If ever

you live to see your friends, you will have strange news to tell them, believe me. When holy men seize the sword, and fight in carnal battles, no mortal arm can resist them. We have taught your sovereign what it is to oppose Heaven's vicegerents. He is already tottering on his throne. You shall see and know more anon."

The ogre-like being who spoke had taken so much opium during the journey thus far, as to have reached that pitch of excitement to which, when a fakeer arrives, he can submit to bodily tortures altogether incredible. His eyes glared with the glassy radiance of incipient madness. Though the heat was intolerable, and the earth steamed with the intensity of the sun's rays, like exhalations from a caldron, he leaped about, and threw himself into a thousand contortions, until his body was covered with a tawny scum from the severity of his exercise. After he had fatigued himself by these violent antics, he took a number of large needles, and having passed them through the flesh in several parts of his body, threaded them with silks of various colours, and then strutted before the party with the pride and bearing of one conscious of having performed an act for which he should receive the

homage of his companions, who treated him with a reverence evidently very flattering to the spiritual vanity of this mad visionary. Having at length relieved himself from the needles, he drew the silken strings through the wounds, and then attaching to each a small pointed instrument, exceedingly sharp, turned himself round until the rotation became so violent that the outline of his figure was scarcely distinguishable. When he ceased, his body was covered with gashes, and reeking with blood.

After six hours of continued travelling, with scarcely a pause, the party arrived at the foot of a small hill, which had evidently been spared from the devastation that exhibited so sad a prospect in the surrounding country. The prisoner, though overcome by the excessive fatigue of so arduous a journey, was not allowed to pause, but compelled to proceed up the ascent. About midway a considerable ruin was disclosed, upon which the last rays of the sun slanted, as it was sinking behind the low hills that skirted the distant plain. The entrance was lofty, and encumbered with fragments of pillars, which time or violence had thrown down. Within was an extensive area; on every side of it were gigantic sculptures, represent-

ing the history of some Hindoo superstition, which had been greatly mutilated by the zeal of pious Mahomedans. This building was a dilapidated choultry, and had been converted into the vestibule of the abode of an old crone, bending beneath the weight of years, and mistress of inexhaustible treasures.

In this hall, Bistamia, which was the hag's name, was engaged in preparing the evening meal for her beggarly dependants;—a thing she invariably did with her own hands. During the culinary process, she appeared to mutter certain incantations over the smoking viands, which consisted of the most revolting ingredients.

When the stranger was brought before her, she eyed him with that haggard, feeble scowl peculiar to wicked old age, in which is exhibited the will, but not the power, of the demon. Her deformed and decrepit body was bare to the waist, and presented a loathsome image of living mortality.

What an antidote to the vanity of youth and the pride of beauty! Her white locks streamed over her brown, withered shoulders, exhibiting one of those repelling contrasts, which the eye cannot gaze upon without instinctively closing. Her skin hung from her like the dewlap of a sacred

bull, but flaccid and bloodless, as if the principle of life were withdrawn from it. The nails of her fingers had grown into claws, and seemed as if they could distil poison, like those of the Egyptian lizard.*

"Her eyes with scalding rheum were galled and red,"

and her whole appearance seemed to speak "variety of wretchedness." She approached the stranger, eyed him with a look of intense malice, and said,

"Who are you, son of a dog! How came you within these walls?"

"I am," replied the stranger, "an officer of the imperial army, who, upon the issue of an unsuccessful encounter with your insurgent fanatics, have fallen into their hands. How I came within these walls, they will best explain to you."

"Hah! an enemy!—you shall soon learn how we treat enemies when they profane our sanctuary. Would you save your life?"

"I have no desire to die."

"Ay, the burden of every coward's song; fall down, then, at our feet, and hail us Queen of the Moguls."

"The Moguls were never ruled by women."

* The Gecco.

"Say you so!—we shall see. Bind him to yonder statue."

Her order was speedily executed; and the hag began to prepare the last dish of the evening's refection. This was a medley, fit only for the stomachs of ghoules or devils. It happened to be a certain day of the moon, and on this day the same mixture was always placed before her retainers. The first thing she ordered to be brought, when about to make her infernal stew, was the trunk of a human body, which had been conveyed for this very purpose from the scene of slaughter. She deliberately cut large pieces from the fleshy parts; these she divided into small squares, wi.. slow, calculating precision, and then placed them severally in a human skull that stood beside her. Having covered them with a layer of herbs that had been gathered under certain influences of the moon, she took from a covered basket a hooded snake, from the jaws of which the poisonous fangs had been previously extracted, and placed it alive in the skull. To this she added the legs of a frog, the tail of a lizard, the head of a bat, and the claws of an owl. Having placed the skull, with its contents, in a capacious earthen vessel, in which there was a sufficient quantity of water to

complete the dressing, she put it upon the fire, and watched it with eager anxiety, muttering to herself a sort of mystical chant during the entire period of the cooking. The smoke ascended in volumes from the flame over which this disgusting mess was hanging, and soon filled the whole chamber with a thick and suffocating cloud.

The mode of hanging the earthenware vessel over the blaze was fully as remarkable as any part of the singular process. Two fakeers stood on either side of the fire, an iron bar resting upon the shoulders of each, from which the mysterious stew was suspended above the flame.

When sufficiently dressed, the skull was taken from the earthenware receptacle; its contents were put upon square pieces of plantain leaf, and the portions placed before each fakeer present, who devoured with a greediness that made the prisoner's heart leap up to his throat.

The idea of those wretched enthusiasts was, that this abominable meal would have the surprising effect not only of rendering them fearless in the day of battle, but of inspiring their enemies with such terror that they would not dare to approach them; that, moreover, it would cause them to become invisible when engaged with their foes, who

would thus fall an easy prey to persons so supernaturally endowed.

A portion of a mess which had been previously prepared was offered to the prisoner; but he rejected it with disgust, and partook only of some plain boiled rice, which somewhat refreshed him after so long and toilsome a journey.

When they had concluded their evening's repast, Bistamia retired from the scene of this extraordinary carousal, and the fakeers, flinging themselves upon the bare ground, without the slightest covering, were soon hushed in profound repose. The opium, in which they had indulged to excess, rendered their sleep so heavy that it seemed lil the deep slumber of death. The flames, by which the chamber had been illumined, subsided by degrees, and the gloom of silence and darkness gradually succeeded.

CHAPTER II.

The Mogul was left chained to one of the statues on the side-wall, when the fakeers betook themselves to their night's repose: the chain by which he was fastened only enabled him to seat himself upon the floor. He could not lay his body at full length, and was therefore obliged to lean his back against the figure to which he was attached. In that position he tried for some time to sleep, but without effect; feverish and distracting thoughts obtruded. His reflections were of the most melancholy character. He was surrounded by a body of enthusiasts, into whose power he had fallen, and who would very probably doom him to some cruel death, by way of celebrating the orgies of their sanguinary superstition. Fanatics are the worst of tyrants; who, alas! too often do the work of the devil, whilst they fancy themselves working in the service of their God. In proportion as the infatuation takes possession of their minds, they become cruel to-

wards all such as they imagine seceders from the worship of that deity of whom they claim to be vicegerents, and see no virtue but in those who, like themselves, have been inoculated with the rabies of spiritual enthusiasm. In every age of the world, in every country, and among all communities, that sort of enthusiasm which claims exclusive spiritual endowment, and pretends to supernatural communications, is the greatest bane against which pure Religion has ever had to contend. It invests her in a factitious garb that conceals while it arrays her. False zeal has driven more from the true fold than have fallen victims to the slaughter of war, the inroads of pestilence, or the devastations of famine. No one is driven into the paths of peace, or scourged into the embrace of virtue. All men are won to good by its own sweet suggestions, by gentle imploıations, by the light and fragrant blessings which it offers to those who properly seek to possess them; not by those terrible denunciations which scare the timid, offend the proud, and provoke the contempt of the reckless.

The prisoner was pursuing these reflections with a melancholy sense of his present condition. He gazed round the apartment to see if he might en-

courage any hopes of escape. The embers yet glowing upon the stone floor, threw a sickly light around, which only rendered the remote gloom of the chamber still more murky. The fakeers, who were stretched at length near the smouldering fire, looked like so many semi-monsters under the power of enchantment. Their hard breathing, the only symptom of life which they exhibited, sufficiently indicated the intensity of their slumber, that seemed to have been rendered more profound by the horrible meal of which they had partaken, just before they gave themselves up to the enjoyments of "nature's sweet restorer."

The prisoner, closing his eyes, tried to conjure up images before the speculum of his mind more agreeable than those realities upon which it was an agony to gaze;—finally overcome by bodily fatigue and mental exhaustion, he fell into an unquiet sleep.

His slumber was at length disturbed by the pressure of a gentle grasp upon his arm. He opened his eyes and perceived that there was an object standing between him and the light, which had already begun to dispel the gloom of the capacious apartment in which he lay. Unable to guess what such a visit could portend, he re-

mained motionless, though not entirely without some painful apprehensions of mischief. After an interval of a few moments, the hand was removed from his arm and placed upon his brow. The tender pressure, the smoothness of the palm, the feminine texture and delicate movement of the fingers, convinced him in an instant that it was the hand of woman, but not of her whom he had looked upon the previous evening with a loathing so absolute that his very blood curdled, and whose fingers would have rather pressed upon his forehead like the hard-pointed talons of a harpy, than with the soft and thrilling impress of an angel's touch.

That touch made every nerve thrill with emotion. The stranger leaned over him as if to hear from his breathing whether he slept profoundly or not. Her breath was as the air of Paradise. He could not be mistaken. There was an inexplicable but infallible sympathy which assured him,—with that mysterious power of conviction communicated how we know not, but still more powerful than any arising from positive testimony,—that the being before him was something far above the ordinary level of human nature. He listened instinctively to catch the music of her voice; his breath

was for the moment suspended lest the least sound from her lips should escape his ear. He was in a waking trance, the more delicious from its succeeding to reflections which had so painfully harassed him.

"Stranger!" at length said a soft voice in a tone that seemed to come from the throat of a Peri.

"Who is it that calls me?" asked the prisoner, in a scarcely audible whisper.

"One who has compassion upon your condition, and would give you the means of freedom if you are disposed to embrace them."

"Shall we not be overheard by those holy sleepers who are lying round yonder embers?"

"No; they are lapped in too profound a slumber to be easily roused."

"To whom do I address myself?"

"To the grand-daughter of Bistamia, who would escape with you the most odious of all slaveries. You will no doubt be surprised that I speak thus freely to a stranger; but mine is a desperate position, and I seek its alleviation under any circumstances. To-morrow, when the fakeers shall have quitted these walls, which they will do to engage the Emperor's troops, I may

see you again. I have sought you now to apprize you that a friend is at hand, bent upon your release. To-morrow we meet—farewell!" —and her aërial figure glided through the gloom, without leaving the faintest echo of her footsteps, like a bright mist in a summer eve over the surface of a calm lake, upon which the mountains have projected their gigantic shadows.

Shortly after the morning had cast its fresh light into the gloomy hall, the fakeers awoke, and rising from their hard bed, each with a sudden motion of the different limbs, caused the joints to snap with a sound like the cracking of nuts in rapid succession; after which they seated themselves, crossed their legs, and began to smoke, passing the tube from mouth to mouth, every one inhaling the luxurious narcotic from the same instrument. After a while Bistamia entered.

"Come," said she, "'tis time you were on your way. The Emperor's troops were encamped last night beyond the country over which we have passed with the scourge of our power. They will be on their march by this time; you must all fight and wrap the souls of your foes in the black veil of terror. Who undergoes the penance this morning?"

Without uttering a word, one of the fakeers who had accompanied the Mogul on the day of his capture, and rendered himself conspicuous by passing needles through his flesh, rose from his recumbent position, and, with an expression of callous indifference, advanced towards the spot where the flame had brightly blazed on the preceding evening. Rubbing two smooth pieces of a black-grained wood rapidly together, he kindled a tuft of dry grass on which some brushwood had been placed, and upon this several dry logs. A strong fire was soon burning, into which the devotee placed a long cylindrical rod of iron. In the course of a few moments it became red hot. When in this state, he placed the point of the rod against his cheek, and deliberately pressed it until it had passed through his tongue, and was visible on the other side. It was then bent down on either cheek, towards the shoulder, forming three sides of a square, to prevent the possibility of its being withdrawn. The stern composure of his countenance did not relax a single instant during the revolting infliction. His companions looked upon him with fatuitous admiration, making him the most solemn obeisance after the odious penance had been concluded.

The man next deliberately opened the wounds which he had made on the previous day, and passed different coloured strings through them. Thus adorned, he declared himself ready to go forth in his own invincible might, and crush the enemies of his venerable patron. Bistamia placed a golden boon within his half-closed hand, upon which he grinned as well as his locked jaws would permit, and was about to quit the place accompanied by his companions, when the hag said with a savage laugh: "On your return you shall enjoy a rare pastime with yonder son of a scurvy dog: I will reserve him for your merriment. A little easy blood-spilling without labour will be a relaxation, after the fatigue of making carrion in the gross. Go and prosper—slay and spare not!" They made their salaam, departed, and the prisoner was once more left to his own solitary reflections.

About noon, his visitor of the night approached him. As she advanced, the lightness of her step, and the buoyant elasticity of every motion of her frame, proclaimed the beauty which he had already anticipated. In a few moments, a lovely girl, in the very birth and freshness of womanhood, stood before him. She was young and beautiful as the morning stars when they sang together at

the birth of creation. Her breath seemed impregnated with spicy perfume, wafted on gentlest airs from the shores of Arabia the Happy. It invested her in an atmosphere of its own.

Her eyes were dark—of the deepest hue, but brilliant as gems, and soft as the soul of which they were eloquent interpreters. Her hair was raised in a cone on the top of her head, and confined by a long silver pin, giving increased altitude to her majestic figure, and exposing the whole of her finely-arched forehead to the rapturous gaze of the Mogul.

"I would not have escaped this captivity for worlds!" he cried, as she stood beside him in the plenitude of her almost unearthly beauty.

"Stranger," she replied, "have you the courage to bear me from the house of bondage, if I free you from your chains?"

"Try me; and if I fail to realize your wishes, cast me back again to my prison, and gall my limbs with the fetters from which I should no longer deserve to be free."

She bent over him, and released his hands from the manacles that confined them, and he stood before her disencumbered of his bonds.

"Listen," cried the beautiful girl, "while I un-

fold to you the miserable position in which I stand. My grandmother has given me as a concubine to the fakeer who this morning underwent the penance which you witnessed. On his return from the battle he will claim me. I need scarcely tell you that I entertain towards him a disgust so intrinsical and unconquerable, that I am determined to die by my own hands rather than become the instrument of that man's pleasures. Upon you my hopes are fixed to release me from this horrible alternative. To-night, when the fakeers shall be hushed in sleep after their debauch, in which they are sure to indulge, we may fly from these detested walls. Meanwhile, you must resume your chains. You will now have the power of casting them off when you please. At midnight I will again visit you, prepared to fly with you from the most odious persecution to that freedom which I shall rely upon your honour for securing to me."

The sound of footsteps induced her to depart; and Bistamia entered, followed by several fakeers, who announced another defeat of the imperial troops by the naked army of an old woman.

"'Tis well," she cried; "to-morrow I shall place myself at the head of my brave followers for

a final victory, and the imperial sceptre shall shortly be swayed by a wiser head than ever surmounted the shoulders of an Emperor.

In the course of that evening, the abode of Bistamia was filled with her victorious enthusiasts, who encouraged her absurd pretensions to the Mogul throne.

CHAPTER III.

At midnight the granddaughter of Bistamia entered the dreary vestibule, and approaching the prisoner, he immediately released himself from his bonds. Several fakeers were sleeping in a distant part of the chamber, and among them the fanatic who had passed the red-hot iron through his cheek. The captive had scarcely cast aside his chains, when the fakeer started to his feet, and rushed forward like a demon. His appearance was beyond description hideous. The wound in his tongue, in which the iron rod was still fixed, prevented him from articulating; thus his efforts to speak were followed by unintelligible sounds, so discordant that they seemed to come from the throat of some monstrous wild beast yet unknown to man. His eyes flashed with the lurid glow of a live coal, dimmed by the cold air, and the fires of which are fast fading. Some half-consumed logs still burnt upon the floor, where they had been kindled to prepare the evening's meal as before, and afforded

sufficient light to show the ferocious aspect of this truculent visionary. He seized the trembling girl in his arms,—for this was the monster to whose embraces she was to be devoted by her grandmother,—and was about to bear her off, when the Mogul raised his chain, and, hitting him with all his force upon the temple, struck him to the earth. The wretched man gave a horrible howl as he fell; this was accompanied with a smothered groan, and all was still. The floor was almost instantly covered with his blood. The temporal artery had been divided with the force of the blow, and he lay dead before his intended victims.

The other fakeers had by this time advanced and seized the prisoner, who prostrated two of the fanatics with his chain before they could succeed in binding him. Bistamia was summoned. When she saw her favourite dead, she shrieked like a maniac, and staggering towards her granddaughter, laid her skinny fingers upon the latter's shoulders, and looking into her eyes as if she would work a demon's spell upon her, cursed her with a loud and bitter imprecation.

"Thou shalt die before to-morrow's sun goes to his rest, and thy accomplice with thee. The expiring groans of both shall swell the song of

to-morrow's triumph. Chain them to yonder wall."

This order was instantly obeyed; they were each chained to a figure in recesses of the wall, about twelve feet apart. They could just see each other. A guard of fakeers was placed over them. They were not allowed to converse. Those ferocious bigots took delight in dwelling upon the horrible tortures to which the Mogul was to be exposed, by way of signalising their contemplated victory on the morrow. They felt a savage joy in exciting their prisoner's terrors; and the tears of the beautiful girl, who had become the companion of his captivity, only excited their sto... hearts to fresh insults.

Next morning, just as Bistamia was prepared to quit the vestibule for the purpose of heading her army of fanatics, a messenger entered, informing her that the Emperor had employed magical incantations, in order to secure her defeat.

She was startled at this intelligence: Aurungzebe's known sanctity led her to fear that a spiritual warfare pursued by him would be likely to turn the tide of success against her.

"What are the methods of the enemy's sorcery?" asked the hag.

"He has delivered to each soldier in his army a small billet, written with his own hand, and, as it is supposed, with his own blood, containing magical incantations. He has moreover ordered similar billets to be carried upon the point of a spear before each squadron, which the soldiers are persuaded will counteract the enchantments of their enemies; so that they are advancing with a degree of enthusiasm which I fear will be irresistible."

Bistamia was perplexed, for she had sagacity enough to perceive that the same credulity which had induced Aurungzebe's troops to believe in the witchcraft of an old woman, would give them at least equal confidence in the pretended charm of their Emperor.

"Well, should they drive us to the foot of this mountain, the stronghold behind will defy them: a few resolute spirits may defend the hill from a host; and success has given courage to the army of the fakeers. They will protect their potentate to the last drop of their blood.

"But where is our leader?"

"Dead."

"A bad omen of success!"

"Will not the presence of Bistamia inspirit the

naked armies of Paradise—for thither they are on their way, through a pilgrimage of warfare—to crush the outcasts? We shall teach them yet a terrible lesson. Come—to the field, and mind"—turning to the fakeers who had charge of the captives —"you look with a vigilant eye upon those doomed offenders who shall expiate their crimes with their blood. This night their death-pangs shall record our triumph."

Dashing her long pale locks from her withered forehead, she seized a dagger and staggered from the spot.

She had some reason for the confidence she expressed in the strength of the place selected for her abode. The hill was steep, and accessible only by a single path: by rolling down huge stones upon the heads of a besieging force, a few resolute men might defend the ascent against multitudes. This had been already done with fatal success. Beyond the vestibule, in which the two prisoners were confined, was an extensive range of apartments, hollowed out of the living rock. The entrance was from the ruin, through a long passage only fifteen inches wide and thirty feet in length, cut through the solid stone, and protected by a sort of massive iron portcullis, which was let

down about the centre, and raised or lowered by means of heavy chains. The dimensions of the excavations beyond were prodigious; there being cavern after cavern, in which were deposited immense treasures of various descriptions; but how realised has remained a mystery, though considered to have been the produce of sorcery.

The neighbourhood of this spot was shunned as an enchanted region; and the desolation spread by the inexorable Bistamia around her dwelling, only tended to increase the superstitious horror with which she was universally regarded.

The Mogul's situation was now far more distressing than it had been since his captivity among the fakeers. He could not behold his lovely companion suffering on his account without the keenest emotions. But for him she would be at that moment free; and yet the bitterness of these reflections was, in some measure, qualified by the knowledge that her liberty was worse than bondage, exposed as she had been to the loathsome advances of a man whom she could not look upon without abhorrence, and to whose detestable passions her innocence might have been eventually sacrificed. He felt, therefore, some consolation, amid the harassing thoughts which poured like a

turbid flood upon his mind. He was forbidden to hold any conversation with his fellow-captive; so that, although they could see each other's misery, they were not allowed the sad consolation of reciprocating their thoughts. The moment he made an effort of this kind, one of his naked guards stood before him, and drowned his voice with horrible imprecations.

Four of these wretches were left as a guard over him and the partner of his captivity. They indulged in that loose freedom of conversation peculiar to the lowest and most depraved natures. Seated upon the bare stones of the apartment, they smoked and chewed bhang* until they were nearly stupified. One of them then brought a leathern bottle full of arrack, from a hole underneath one of the pillars; and this strong spirit they continued to drink until they were all in a state of disgusting intoxication. They then danced before their prisoners, raving like maniacs, and flourishing their clubs over their heads with terrifying violence. Fatigued at length with these exertions, they threw themselves prostrate, and were soon sunk in swinish sleep.

* An intoxicating leaf.

The dead body of the fakeer still lay where it had fallen when the soul quitted its deformed tabernacle for a brighter or a darker destiny. The odours which exhaled from it were becoming extremely offensive; and the prospect of soon breathing an atmosphere teeming with the foul particles of corruption, was anything but a promising subject of contemplation to the wretched captives.

The thoughts of escape now took entire possession of the Mogul's mind. His guards were powerless, and he began to try the strength of his chains. He was fastened to the leg of a gigantic figure which stood in a niche, and which, therefore, the darkness of the place had hitherto prevented him from examining. It happened that the sun, being at this moment opposite to a small aperture in the roof of the building, poured a narrow but strong stream of light upon the figure. On examining minutely the limb to which he was fastened, the prisoner observed a large crack in the stone, just above the ankle: this opened in the slightest degree when he pulled the chain. He felt confident that, by a great effort, he could break off the stone limb; though even then he would only free himself in a degree, for his wrists were bound

together by a handcuff, to which the chain was attached that fastened him to the statue. The discovery, however, gave him some hope of eventually being able to take advantage of it; and his mind became considerably calmed. He dreaded Bistamia's return, remembering her horrible menaces, and having good reason to believe that she would not fail to put them into execution, if something did not intervene to cross her sanguinary purpose.

The fakeers still slept. Except their loud breathings, nothing was heard to disturb the gloomy silence that reigned around. It was already long past noon, and no tidings had been received of the hostile armies. At length distant shouts came suddenly upon the ear. They sounded like the acclamations of triumph, mingled with those frantic yells peculiar to the fakeers when under a state of violent excitement. The sounds gradually approached, and it soon became evident that victory had favoured the Moguls. The clash of arms was now heard, cries of the pursuing and pursued were distinctly perceptible, and at length rose to a tumult.

In a few moments, Bistamia entered the vestibule, spotted with gore. The whole upper part

of her bronzed fleshless body was uncovered. Her appearance was positively hideous. There was a deep gash in her neck, whence the blood bubbled. She staggered towards her granddaughter, —a dagger glimmered in her bony fingers. She raised it over the head of the trembling girl, who sat mute and motionless under her harpy clutch, blanched with terror. The old crone gave a gasp: a guttural chuckle followed, and her arm fell; she fixed her teeth, whilst her eyes glared on those of her victim.

The Mogul, in a paroxysm of alarm for the safety of one who had put her life in jeopardy for him, threw his whole weight on the chain which attached him to the statue. The cracked limb gave way. He rushed towards the hag, raised his chained hands to strike, but perceived that she was motionless. Her arm had not force to impel the dagger which had fallen from her feeble grasp, and the wretched creature lay dead on the bosom of her grandchild.

A party of Moguls entered. The drunken fakeers were instantly put to death, and the two captives released. The apartments beyond the vestibule were searched, and vast hoards of wealth discovered, which were seized, and ultimately de-

posited in the imperial treasury. The lovely Zulima was received with flattering courtesy by the Emperor, and shortly after became the wife of her late companion in chains, who proved to be the son of Shaista, one of Aurungzebe's favourite generals.

The Mahratta Chief.

The Mahratta Chief.

CHAPTER I.

A CAVALCADE was on its way to Madura through one of those deep gorges with which the Western Ghauts abound. Evening had already set in, and, thickened by the dense shadows of the mountains which intercept the sun's rays as he verges towards the horizon, the darkness was intense. The evening hour had been chosen by the travellers for the renewal of their journey, in order to escape the scorching heat of the sun, which in the day-time, when reflected from the bare sides of the hills, is so great as to be scarcely endurable. The night was lovely. The glen through which the party were passing was a profound hollow; above the mountains rose on either side, sloping upwards from the base, and thus presenting the form of a funnel. The sky, seen from this pitchy glen, appeared of uncommon brilliancy, and was

so thickly studded with stars, that the light seemed to percolate through the entire expanse: but it reached not the bosom of the ravine through which the travellers were passing, being repelled by the ponderous shadows of the surrounding hills.

In the midst of the cavalcade was a palankeen of costly construction, borne upon the shoulders of four sturdy Hindoos. Round it hung a rich silk drapery which entirely enclosed and concealed the person within. Whining a dull monotonous chant, the hamauls * proceeded at a slow but steady pace, on account of the inequalities of the ground. A guard of a hundred and fifty soldiers followed close behind them. The murmurs of their voices as they chatted to beguile the tediousness of their journey was multiplied by the slumbering echoes of the hills, which were awakened at their approach, and appeared to mock them with their own hilarity.

They came at length to a gloomy pass between two huge masses of rock that seemed to have been cast there by some mighty convulsion of the earth. Here the strait was so exceedingly narrow that there was scarcely room to force the palankeen through.

* Palankeen bearers.

Two men could not go abreast. When the hamauls were just about to emerge from this mountain gorge, they found their progress opposed by a troop of armed men. Cowardly at all times, and rendered doubly so by their confined position, they would have cast down their burthen and fled; but as this was impossible from the nature of the passage, they fell upon their knees with the palankeen still resting on their shoulders, and implored mercy of the armed strangers.

Little ceremony was used in reply to their supplications. The palankeen was lifted from their shoulders and taken possession of, together with its burthen, and the bearers were ordered to make the best of their way back through the passage, upon pain of summary chastisement. This was no easy matter to accomplish, as the troops followed so closely behind that several were already in the gorge. With some difficulty the passage was at length cleared; but when the guards learned what had taken place, they pushed forward to recover their charge, and in a few moments the strait was again filled. The foremost man, however, was thrust through the body with a lance the moment he reached the end of the strait.

"Advance another step," said a voice, in a tone

that showed it had been practised in command, "and you die. We are in force sufficient to slaughter you like so many wild conies coming out of a burrow. Remain patiently where you are for a few minutes, and your march shall be no further impeded."

"Where is the palankeen?" demanded the guard.

"Where it and its gentle occupant will be well attended to. We know our prize. She must lack refreshment amid the rugged passes of these hills, and we are prepared to afford her a specimen of our hospitality."

"To whom will she be indebted for this compulsive courtesy?"

"To Sevajee, the Mahratta. The Princess Rochinara will be safe in his custody. Tell the Emperor, on your return, that his daughter is with those whom he contemptuously calls 'The Robbers of the Hills:' but Sevajee may live to dispute with him the throne of Delhi; he therefore need not deem an alliance with the Chief of the Mahrattas a disgrace."

By this time the party who had attacked the palankeen had dispersed, leaving only their leader, and a few followers. These, when sufficient time

had been given to secure their captive, suddenly plunged into the recesses of the mountains, with most of which they were familiar, and left the troops of Aurungzebe to pursue their march, with nothing to protect but their own lives. They emerged from the glen, and in their rage at losing their sovereign's daughter, who had been committed to their custody, they sacrificed the hamauls on the spot, determined to represent to the Emperor that the treacherous Hindoos had purposely led them into the pass, in order to betray them into the power of Sevajee. They knew Aurungzebe to be an inexorable man, and feared the consequences of making known to him the loss of his daughter, whilst under their protection. He made no allowance either for accidents or contingencies. Whenever anything happened contrary to his expectations, the presumed instruments of failure were generally punished, and too frequently with the loss of life. Like all tyrants, he was without pity; and his sympathies might really be said never to be excited, save where they received their impulse from something either directly bearing upon, or collaterally allied to, his own interests.

The soldiers dreaded an interview with their

sovereign, who was at that time encamped near Madura, where he daily expected his daughter to join him. She had left the Deccan for that purpose, and was passing the Ghauts, when she was captured by the daring Mahratta, as already related.

The princess was borne from her guards, and carried for some hours through the intricate windings of the hills, until at length the bearers stopped before a small mountain fortress. It was still dark, but having emerged from the lower regions of this elevated range, the gloom had considerably diminished, and near objects were sufficiently visible to render the progress of travelling tolerably certain. The princess was desired to alight from her palankeen, and being respectfully placed in a sort of basket, ingeniously woven from the husk of the cocoa-nut, was drawn up into the fortress, the entrance of which was through a low portal, terminating a narrow landing-place upon the naked side of the hill. Through this, after traversing a short passage, there was an ascent by steps into the fort, which was not extensive, containing a garrison of only sixty men.

The Princess Rochinara was ushered into a small but airy chamber; and two of her women, who

had been taken with her, were allowed to attend upon their captive mistress. The princess was at this time only in her seventeenth year, of an agreeable rather than handsome person, finely formed, showy, of a healthy, vigorous constitution, and sprightly countenance. She was a great favourite of her father, and therefore not under much apprehension from her present captivity, knowing that he would immediately make an effort to rescue her from bondage, and the warlike efforts of Aurungzebe had seldom failed of being crowned with success. She knew not into whose power she had fallen, but imagined that a band of mountain robbers had captured her, and intended to retain her, merely for the sake of a liberal ransom, which she was satisfied her parent would never pay, but release her at the point of the sword.

For a day or two she saw no one but her attendants, and, having been accustomed to the seclusion of the harem, she did not find her solitude at all insupportable. One of her women, who was an adept at story-telling, and had made herself acquainted with many of the singular legends of Hindoo history, entertained her mistress by relating some of those monstrous fictions which abound in those two poetical depositories of the

marvellous, the Mahabarat and Ramayana. Thus the time was agreeably beguiled, until the princess became, at length, impatient to know something about her captivity, and into whose hands she had fallen. No information was to be obtained upon this interesting question. A soldier daily brought the gentle captives their food, but did not utter a word in reply to their questions, which only imparted a keener edge to their anxiety.

On the fourth morning after Rochinara had become an occupant of the mountain fortress, an unusual bustle announced an arrival; but nothing could be drawn from the soldier when he paid his usual periodical visit; his lips appeared hermetically sealed, for not even the offer of a liberal bribe could tempt him to unclose them. Patience, therefore, was the only alternative left; and in all cases of captivity it is a cardinal virtue. The princess, however, was becoming restless;—she rejected her food—she grew petulant, and no longer listened with any relish to the tales of her favourite woman. Her eyes were often suffused with tears; but during a rather strong burst of emotion, occasioned more from the idea of being neglected than of being a captive, the door of her prison was opened, and to her surprise, not un-

mingled with pleasure, her captor stood before her. He was a short, compactly built man, apparently under thirty years of age. His face was round and "full-orbed," but every feature small and highly expressive. His eye was intensely brilliant, and seemed to possess a concentration of power that could pierce through anything opposed to its gaze. Its expression was somewhat severe — restless, quick, and scrutinising; but that of every other feature was bland even to playfulness. The forehead was both high and broad, and as smooth as the surface of a mirror. There was no hair on his face, except rather a strong moustache on the upper lip, which was in perfect harmony with the true Oriental cast of his countenance. His neck, bare to the shoulder, was rather short, and as thick as that of a Thessalian bull; whilst his ample expanse of chest denoted that strength and hardihood with which he was particularly endowed. His legs were uncovered to the knee, and modelled with a neatness and upon such an exact scale of proportion as to combine masculine beauty with that physical vigour to which true symmetry is invariably allied.

The stranger stood with his arms folded before the princess, after having made her a courteous

salaam. She gazed upon him at first only without displeasure; but it was evident, by the gradual brightening of her countenance, that a more minute scrutiny produced something the very opposite of dissatisfaction. She waited several moments for the visitor to address her; but he remained silent, keeping his eyes steadily fixed upon the interesting Rochinara, as if awaiting her commands. An arch smile danced in his eye, and an occasional undulation of the upper lip showed that he was not about to play the ruffian.

"To whom," said the princess at length, in a gentle voice, "am I indebted for the constrained hospitality to which I am forced to submit?"

"To Sevajee, Chief of the Mahrattas."

"But why is the daughter of the Emperor Aurungzebe arrested in her journey, and forced to become an occupant of this fortress?"

"Because, lady, the Mahratta chief desires to be upon a better footing with the Emperor of the Moguls, and would make the daughter a medium of alliance with the father."

"The Princess Rochinara could never stoop to so low a degradation as to become the wife of a mountain robber."

"You mistake, lady; I am a sovereign in these

mountain solitudes, and all monarchs are equal in moral rights. The name of Sevajee will be heard of among the heads of nations; for who so renowned as the founders of kingdoms? You are in my power; but I shall not use that power to win you to my purpose. I am content to woo; and assure yourself, that no woman who can look upon the sun would be degraded by becoming the wife of the Mahratta chief. Whatever you desire, express it, and your command in all things, save quitting this fortress, will be obeyed. We shall be better acquainted; and when you know me, you may think me something nobler than a robber. We shall meet daily. Farewell!"

Making a low obeisance, with a calm smile he quitted the apartment.

CHAPTER II.

The rise of the Mahratta power in India was one of those sudden and surprising revolutions which, amid the troubled currents of political events, have been so frequently seen to spring from the reaction of despotism. The Mogul empire, under the able though absolute direction of Aurungzebe, extended over nearly the whole of India. The most fertile and populous provinces of Hindostan were subjected to the dominion of a tyrant, who nevertheless governed wisely, though he ruled despotically. The extensive plains of the Deccan and of Hindostan Proper, which are protected by that elevated chain of mountains called the Ghauts, forming a natural and almost impregnable barrier against irregular and undisciplined troops, were inhabited by a hardy and active race. They felt the galling yoke of a conqueror; they were encouraged to resistance by their distance from the capital of their despot, and by the natural barriers which, under judicious management and an en-

terprising leader, were considered an almost certain protection against the inroads of an invading army. Besides this, the Mahomedan nations had been involved in such constant wars, and the successions of that mighty state were so continually disputed and so bloodily contested, that ample opportunities were afforded to a leader of daring and comprehensive mind to assemble the disunited members of a vast and dislocated empire, at a distance from the seat of government, and establish them into an independent community, upon the wreck of that power by which they had been subdued. Such a leader was Sevajee, the founder of the Mahratta dyna .y, which finally became the most flourishing in Hindostan. This hero was born in 1627, at Poonah, then a village, but afterwards the capital of the Mahratta state. He was of noble descent, and great pains seem to have been taken in training him early to deeds of arms. He despised letters, but devoting himself to military exercises, soon commenced that career of enterprise which distinguished him above all the heroes of his day. Before he was eighteen, he had collected together a band of the inhabitants of his native glens, and commenced the daring but inglorious profession

of a robber. By degrees he became a terror to the neighbouring princes, in whose territories his depredations were committed. From heading a few profligate adventurers, he rose to be the leader of a small but formidable army. Fortresses and cities submitted to his arms, and he found himself at length master of a considerable extent of territory, with an army of fifty thousand foot and seven thousand horse.

Such prodigious and rapid accession of power alarmed the jealousy of Aurungzebe, who was by this time securely seated upon the throne of the Moguls, and seemed resolved to extend his conquests to the farthest possible limits. He therefore sent a large body of troops under an experienced leader to crush the rising influence of the Mahrattas; but the wary conduct of Sevajee, who was prolific in dacoit* stratagems, baffled the military skill and defeated the enterprises of the Mogul.†

It was to reduce the growing power of this extraordinary man, that the Emperor had marched in person, and was encamped in the neighbourhood of Madura, in order to subdue some re-

* Dacoit gangs are organised bands of robbers.

† See Oriental Annual, vol. i. pp. 212-14.

fractory Polygars who had disturbed the peace of that district, when his daughter was made captive by Sevajee on her way from the Deccan. So difficult were the various passes of the Ghauts for a regular army to traverse, and so impenetrable the jungles, that the bold Mahratta defied the hostile preparations of Aurungzebe, whose detachments he continually defeated, pouring down upon them like a deluge from the hills, committing prodigious ravages and retreating beyond the reach of pursuit to his mountain-holds.

The fortress to which the Princess Rochinara had been conveyed was situated in one of the most impracticable recesses of the Ghauts. The only approach to it was by a path so narrow that two persons could not proceed abreast, and in many places hollowed out of the living rock. It was reached by a gradual ascent of three miles, the road at various places overhung by vast ledges projecting from the precipice by which it was skirted. There a few resolute men might defend themselves against a host. Besides, this part of the country was so thinly populated, and so seldom visited on account of the asperities which it presented to the traveller, that it remained a sort of terra incognita. Sevajee's re-

treats, and among the rest the fortress already mentioned, were known to few or none save his own followers; so that he felt in perfect security against the irruptions of invaders.

The captivity of the princess became daily less and less irksome; all her wishes were complied with, and she finally entertained no further desire to quit a prison where in fact she enjoyed more liberty than in her father's harem. She had been much struck with the frank countenance of the Mahratta, who used daily to visit her, until at length his visits were looked forward to not only with pleasure, but anxiety.

The princess was young, Sevajee was handsome, and, what is always attractive in the eyes of an Eastern beauty, brave. She quickly felt her heart subdued; the merits of the Mahratta could not escape her woman's scrutiny, quickened as this soon was by certain tender predilections.

She now frequently challenged the opinions of her women upon Sevajee's merits, to which they appeared as keenly alive as their mistress, and it was finally no secret throughout the garrison that their chief had obtained a conquest over the affections of the Princess Rochinara.

The royal captive had attracted the admiration

of one of Sevajee's officers, in whose bravery and conduct his chief had great confidence. One day when Sevajee was abroad, this officer ventured to declare himself to the interesting captive. He was rejected with indignation. His passions were roused, and he treated the princess with unmanly violence. She was saved from his brutality by the interference of one of the garrison, who, upon Sevajee's return, informed him of what had happened. The Mahratta made no reply, but repairing to the princess' apartment, learnt from her the precise particulars. Summoning the garrison before him, he thus addressed the offender :—

"You have violated the sanctity of a warrior's home. Arms are placed in our hands to protect, not insult the weak. You must expiate the wrong you have committed. I stand forward as the champion of an insulted woman. You are brave, and know how to defend yourself. There is space within these ramparts to try your prowess against mine. Arm yourself, and let this matter be instantly decided."

Sevajee took his sword, and the combatants repaired to the summit of the rock. His adversary was much taller and bigger than himself,

but far less active, and firmly set. He was, however, a hardy, desperate fellow, who had proved his valour in many a rough encounter. He smiled as he stood before his chief, as if the contest were to him a pastime. Both were armed with a short sabre, a shield, and a broad-bladed dagger stuck in their girdles. The shield was small, reaching from the wrist to the elbow of the left hand, rising to a cone, and terminated by a sharp brass boss. It was covered with an untanned hide.

Sevajee commenced the strife by darting upon the offender with the quickness of an eagle's spring, dashing his shield against that of his opponent, and wounding him with considerable severity on the hip. The man, however, coolly forced backward his indignant chief, and recovering his own guard, advanced upon him with a calm, sullen smile, and struck at his head with a force that would have reached through the skull to the chine, had not the interposing shield caught the blow, and frustrated the intended mischief: it however struck the boss from the buckler, and shattered the frame so completely that Sevajee was obliged to cast it from him, and expose himself unprotected to the attack of his formidable foe. Trusting, however, to his activity, he parried the blows

of his adversary, and baffled his advances by springing on one side; the other, exhausted from fatigue and loss of blood, dropped his sword; Savajee instantly raised his and struck him to the earth. His arm was nearly severed, just below the shoulder, and in this sad state, reeking with gore, he was lowered from the fortress, either to die or make his escape.

This feat of gallantry, in vindication of an insult offered to the daughter of Aurungzebe, completely decided her affections. She accepted the Mahratta's proposals, and from this time felt a greater pride in being the wife of a petty sovereign than the daughter of a mighty emperor.

Sevajee now daily increased in power and influence among the sovereigns of the principalities by which he was surrounded. He was enabled to muster an army of fifteen thousand men, and had become the terror of the neighbouring potentates. He was, to all intents and purposes, sovereign of the Mahrattas, and had made the daughter of Aurungzebe his queen, with her own consent, before she had been in his power two months. His followers were a hardy race, selected from all tribes for their daring exploits, or feats of personal strength.

A common cooley or porter of the mountains had been admitted into his army, and finally raised to a place of trust; the first, in consequence of a singular act of daring, and the last by an uniform adherence to the interests of his master. As the act was singular which first brought this man under the notice of the Mahratta chief, it may be worth recording.

Sevajee was one day passing through a mountain jungle, when a leopard appeared making its way stealthily through the bushes, as if threatening hostility. The cooley was descending the hill at this moment, and seeing the leopard, volunteered to attack it, with a weapon as singular as it was formidable. Opening a small leathern wallet, he took from it an iron instrument, which fitted the hand, covering the fingers like a gauntlet. Beyond the tips of the fingers, it extended to the length of at least three inches, curving like claws, tapered to a point as sharp as the tip of a dagger, being brought to an edge under the curve, nearly as keen as that of a razor. The man fixed it on his hand, * and entered the jungle. The leopard seemed uneasy at his approach, waved its tail,

* A similar instrument is frequently used by the fakeers when they are passing through the jungles, and with like success.

rested its head upon the earth, yet made no attempt to spring. The cooley did not give his enemy time to commence an attack, but advancing boldly, struck it on the right eye, and drawing the instrument across its head, blinded it in a moment. The wounded beast started up, and yelled in agony; when the man deliberately plunged the weapon under its belly, opened a prodigious gash, and the animal's entrails protruded through the wound. It rushed forward, and came with such stunning contact against a tree, that it instantly fell, turned upon its back, and not being able to see its aggressor, another stroke from the instrument despatched it: the victor returned to Sevajee without a scratch. This won the Mahratta's admiration; the cooley was immediately enrolled in Sevajee's army, and from henceforth became a distinguished man.

It was of similar daring spirits that the followers of this formidable chieftain were composed; and when they became numerous, they roused the apprehension of Aurungzebe, who was determined to crush a rising power that threatened to shake the Mogul throne. When made acquainted with his daughter's captivity, he resolved that her deliverance should involve the death of his foe.

CHAPTER III.

The Mahratta, who had been wounded by Sevajee, on being lowered from the fortress, lay some time upon the ground, exhausted from loss of blood. As evening advanced, he crawled into a thicket, and threw himself at the root of a tree surrounded with high coarse grass, upon which he slept until the morning. He tore his turban into strips as well as he was able, stanched the blood that flowed copiously from his wounds, and bound them up. By the next morning his limbs were so stiff that he could scarcely move; he was parched with a painful thirst; his head was confused, and objects floated before his sight in ten thousand fantastic configurations. A thin spring welled from a chasm in the hill; and being acquainted with the locality, thither he dragged his enfeebled body, and bathed his temple in the limpid waters. He drank copiously of the pure element, and was somewhat refreshed. Still, unable to use much exer-

tion, he cast himself again at the root of the tree and slept.

Thus passed the day. The second night came, and he was still there, helpless as a babe. He thought that here his death-bed was made, and resigned himself with sullen courage to his fate. The cries of the jackal disturbed his slumbers, and continually reminded him that he was at the mercy of the prowling beast of the forest. The bright moon looked from her glorious temple of serene and delicate blue, illuminating the boundless expanse through which she marched to her zenith with the majesty and beauty of a thing of heaven, and poured the gentle stream of her light upon the wounded Mahratta, who slept in spite of bodily prostration and of mental suffering. The morning broke upon him bright and cloudless. He was relieved, and his limbs less stiff; for it is astonishing how rapidly the natives of eastern countries recover from the most desperate wounds, owing to their habits of excessive temperance. He quitted the jungle, and proceeded leisurely down the mountain. His progress was slow and difficult; and he was frequently obliged to seek the cool recesses of the forest in order to recruit his exhausted frame.

After a toilsome march of two days he reached the bottom of the Ghauts. He knew that a detachment of Aurungzebe's army lay encamped in the plains. It was commanded by a general of reputation and amounted to fifteen thousand men, prepared to attack Sevajee in his stronghold; but the difficulty was how to reach this through the numerous mountain ravines among which it was concealed and protected.

The wounded man crawled into the camp and desired to be conducted to the general's tent. "I can lead you to the abode of Sevajee," he cried. This was sufficient to remove all reluctance from the minds of the soldiers, who at first showed a disinclination to conduct the stranger to their general. They suspected him to be a spy; but the possibility of his being a traitor gave him a better claim to their courtesy, and they brought him to the tent of the Omrah under whose command they acted.

"What is your motive, soldier," inquired the general, "for entering an enemy's camp?"

"Behold these wounds!" said the man. "They were inflicted by the tyrant who now holds sway over the Mahrattas. That is my sufficient answer why I appear in the Mogul camp."

"Personal enmities are but a poor recommendation to confidence. He who would betray a friend would be little likely to serve a foe."

"Where a person has his revenge to gratify, you have the strongest guarantee for confidence. Apart from all motives that raise man in the scale of moral dignity, that wrong which stimulates to vengeance will render him true to those who promote his deadly purposes; for vengeance is like the raging thirst of fever, never to be slaked till the cause is removed. Until mine is appeased, you may trust me; after that I make no pledges. Do you accept my services?"

"What do you undertake to perform?"

"For a sum of ten thousand rupees, to be paid after the terms of the contract have been fulfilled, I undertake to conduct you to the fortress in these mountains where Sevajee usually resides, and to put you in possession of it. I have a brother among the troops who compose the garrison. He will, I know, promote any scheme that shall bring retribution upon him by whom I have been so grievously wronged. Send a body of fifteen hundred men, when I am sufficiently recovered to march with them, and my life for the issue."

This plan was concurred in, the man taken to a

tent, and his wounds dressed. In three weeks he was in a condition to proceed against the stronghold of the Mahratta chief. Fifteen hundred men were selected for the enterprise; and these were followed at a short distance by another strong detachment, unknown to the Mahratta guide, in case of treachery.

For two days they threaded the mazes of the hills by paths almost impracticable, and halted in the evening of the second day in a wood about three miles from the fortress. The Mahratta, quitting the camp, proceeded up the hill alone, and making a certain signal, well known to the garrison, was drawn up the rock. The soldiers were surprised at beholding their old comrade, who had been so recently expelled, and whom they all considered to have furnished a feast for vultures or jackals. He desired to be conducted before their chief, to whom he expressed the deepest contrition for what had passed, and begged to be again admitted among that community from which he had been expelled. Sevajee, deceived by the soldier's apparent contrition, and knowing him to be a man of great daring and skill in conducting a perilous enterprise, consented to his readmission among his hardy band of mountain warriors.

Before quitting his new allies, the traitor had arranged that, should he gain admission into the fort, he would, in conjunction with his brother, admit them during the midnight watch: that if the thing turned out not to be practicable on that night, they must retire into the thickets, and there await the desired opportunity.

An hour before midnight a body of four hundred men wound slowly up the hill, by the dim light of the stars, and concealed themselves in a hollow about two hundred yards from the fort. This hollow was covered with a thick growth of jungle grass and underwood, which effectually concealed them from observation. The Mahratta had contrived that his brother should be upon guard at midnight at that part of the ramparts where admission was obtained into the fort.

The matter had been so secretly arranged, that nearly a hundred of the Moguls were drawn up into the fortress before any alarm was given. A soldier hurried to Sevajee's apartment, and roused him with the unexpected cry of—"We are surprised! the Moguls have obtained possession of our mountain citadel." The Mahratta chief grasped his sword, and hurried to that part of the ramparts where the two brothers were in the act of drawing

up the enemy, As there was but an uncertain light, his approach was not observed. With the quickness of thought he severed the cord just as a Mogul soldier had been drawn to the landing-place. He did not stay to hear the crash of the succeeding fall, but cutting down the traitor who had admitted the foe, made a speedy retreat to collect the slumbering garrison. He was shortly surrounded by his faithful followers, who all flew to the ramparts.

The Moguls had already destroyed several of the Mahrattas who were taken by surprise, and in the suddenness of their alarm had started unarmed from their beds. Sevajee fought like a lion. The darkness gave him a great advantage over the enemy, who were perfectly ignorant of the localities, though their guide, the treacherous Mahratta, had given them what information the hurry and confusion of the scene permitted. Sevajee sought him out amid the fierce struggle of attack and resistance. They perceived each other in the imperfect light; the rebel would have retired, but the indignant chief arrested his purpose, and compelled him to turn in self-defence. Knowing Sevajee's skill at his weapon, the Mahratta sprang upon and closed with him, hoping to despatch

him with his own dagger; but this purpose was foiled by his active foe, who drew it suddenly from his cummurbund, and flung it over the battlements. The struggle was now desperate. They tugged and strained with the fury of gored bulls. They glared in each other's faces, inhaling the hot breath as it came quick and gasping from their parched throats, and steaming at every pore with the might of their exertions. At length Sevajee, dashing his head into the face of his foe, obliged him partially to relax his hold, and at the same moment springing backward, entirely disengaged himself; and while the other was half stunned, he suddenly rushed forward, forced his head between the traitor's legs, raised him upon his neck, and with irresistible force flung him over the battlements.

Sevajee again seized his sword; but perceiving that the Moguls were masters of the fortress, he flew to the princess:—"You are in the enemy's power—you will be taken to your friends, and have therefore nothing to fear—with me, captivity is the harbinger of death."

"Fly," said Rochinara eagerly; "if there is yet a chance of escape, seize it, and leave me to make my peace with the victors."

There was no time for parley. Sevajee proceeded to a part of the rampart which abutted upon a face of the hill, where the precipice was here and there feathered with shrubs, that grew from the interstices of the rock, and its surface broken into inequalities by projecting ledges, which would not have afforded footing for a goat. At the bottom rolled a deep stream, that gurgled through a straitened channel, and foamed between large masses which had fallen into it from the superincumbent mountain.

The moment was critical. Sevajee commenced this perilous descent. His danger was imminent. The small projections to which he was obliged to trust his footing frequently gave way under the pressure of his step, and he several times despaired of making his escape. About midway the shrub which he had grasped proved too weak to support his weight, and he slipped several yards down the precipice. His course was luckily arrested by a thick bush, something like a huge tuft of birch, which at once broke his fall and arrested his progress.

He was now within forty feet of the water. Here, to the edge of the rivulet, the hill was less precipitous; and having paused a few moments to

rest himself, he determined to slide down the rest of the precipice into the stream, which would break the force of his fall, though it would expose him to the chance of being drowned. Tearing up part of the bush, he placed it under him, in order to prevent himself from being wounded by the rocky projections of the hill. It was a desperate hazard; but he at length let himself slip from the ledge. Sustaining some severe bruises, he was precipitated with considerable violence into the rivulet, which fortunately happened at this spot to be deep, and its channel tolerably free from masses of rock. After a short struggle he gained the opposite bank, and was soon beyond the reach of pursuit.

Meanwhile the princess was taken from the fortress, and borne by easy marches to Delhi, whither her father had retired, leaving his generals to complete the conquest of the Deccan and the subjection of the Mahrattas.

Aurungzebe was greatly exasperated when he discovered that she was about to become a mother. She had ever been his favourite child, and he calculated upon marrying her to some powerful prince, who would strengthen his political influence. She was confined to the harem, and he refused to see her. As soon as her babe was

born, it was taken from her, and put under the care of a nurse, no one knew where. It being a boy, the Emperor was determined that it should be brought up in ignorance of its birth. The mother was wretched at being separated from her infant. The Mahratta chief had ever treated her with tenderness and respect, and she was far less happy amid the splendours of the imperial palace than in the rude citadel of the mountain warrior. She implored to be allowed to see her child; but her parent was inexorable, and the bereaved mother poured out her silent sorrows amid the monotonous seclusion of the harem, where she found neither sympathy nor consolation.

CHAPTER IV.

Sevajee soon summoned his warriors into the field, and, at the head of ten thousand men, invested the fortress of which the Moguls had possessed themselves. In the course of a few weeks he starved them into a surrender. From this time he so rapidly extended his conquests that he was looked upon as a formidable potentate even by the haughty Aurungzebe. He sacked the neighbouring cities, and so enriched himself with the plunder, that he was finally enabled to appear in the field at the head of a very formidable army. His personal prowess and conduct as a leader were the theme of universal praise. Though he could neither read nor write, yet so exact and tenacious was his memory, that the smallest disbursements of his government were never forgotten, and no one could dare attempt to deceive him, even in the minutest matters of financial computation, without certainty of detection. He knew the name of almost every man in his army.

Some time after his escape from the fortress, he was surprised by the imperial general with only a few hundred followers. In this dilemma the Mahratta chief intimated to the Mogul general that he should be very willing to submit to his master's clemency, but was afraid to trust his own person to the mercy of a man who felt such deadly hostility towards him. He consequently proposed a meeting between himself and the imperial general at a distance from their respective armies, and that each party should repair to the spot accompanied by only one attendant. Not doubting that this proposal would be acceded to, the wily Mahratta put a suit of strong chain armour under his cotton robe, and a steel cap under his turban. Then arming himself with a dagger, he proceeded to the place of meeting.

According to his military code of morals, treachery towards an enemy was, under any circumstances, justifiable: he therefore determined to employ it upon the present occasion at all hazards. Distributing his men in ambuscades near the spot, he soon had the satisfaction of seeing the Mogul draw near with an escort of eight hundred men, whom he left at some distance, and advanced with a single follower to the appointed place of

meeting. Sevajee appeared apparently unarmed, expressing great apprehension and affecting alarm at the presence of his enemy. At length, coming up with hesitating steps, according to the Oriental custom, he embraced his foe, at the same moment drawing his dagger and plunging it into his body. The Mogul, feeling himself wounded, instantly drew his sword and struck Sevajee on the head, which was protected by the steel cap; the blow therefore fell harmless, and the wounded general sank under the repeated stabs of his treacherous assailant. His attendant, rushing to his master's assistance, was likewise slain.

The blast of a horn roused the Mahrattas from their ambuscade, and falling upon the Moguls thus taken by surprise, they slew a great number, and the rest, panic-stricken, fell back upon the main body, carrying the melancholy intelligence of their leader's death. Meanwhile the Mahrattas escaped among the intricacies of the mountains, and the Moguls were forced to retreat. Sevajee next marched with his victorious troops to Singurh, one of his strongest fortresses, which had been wrested from him by the Moguls. Like all hill-forts, it was built upon the summit of a lofty rock that rose to the height of ninety feet from a deep glen.

It was considered inaccessible on all sides. At the back, where the precipice declined gradually inward from the summit, the ramparts were not so strong, as any attempt on that side appeared utterly impracticable. On the ridge just outside the parapet that beetled over the base of the rock, grew several trees, the roots of which were partly bared, and projected from the naked face of the hill, in which they were fixed with a tenacity peculiar to those mountain trees that vegetate amid the most scanty supplies of earth, and insert their tough fibres between the fissures of rock composing the face of the precipice.

The daring Mahratta was determined upon regaining possession of this stronghold, and having fixed upon the point of attack, prepared his followers for the desperate enterprise. These consisted of a thousand Mawabees, mountain marauders, who followed the fortunes of their leader, seduced by the hope of plunder and the love of adventure. Choosing a dark night, he resolved to enter the fort on the least practicable side, where he knew such an attempt would never be suspected. Having procured a long cord as thick as a man's thumb, he caused it to be knotted at intervals of about two feet. When this was

prepared, he placed it upon his shoulder and proceeded alone to the fortress through an unfrequented part of the mountain, ordering his men to follow in small parties, and unite in a thicket a few hundred yards from the base of the rock.

Arriving at the desired spot, Sevajee took a leaden ball, and attaching it securely to a slight cord, threw the former with a precision which only long practice in similar feats could have produced, over the projecting root of one of the trees that grew beneath the battlements. This done, he drew the rope with which he had come provided gradually up, and contrived, by means of the small cord, to pass a hook, fixed to the end of the knotted rope, over the root. The hook, upon being pressed by means of a spring, clasped the object upon which it rested with a perfectly secure hold.

Everything being now ready, the Mahratta summoned his band. There were no sentinels placed upon that side of the rampart, on account of the supposed impracticability of an ascent. The night happened to be extremely dark, which favoured the purpose of the assailants. Sevajee mounted first. With the agility of a cat he clambered up the rope and quickly gained the ramparts. The next that followed, being a heavy man, and not over active.

paused about twenty feet from the ground, alarmed at the motion of the rope, which swayed with such a rapid and violent oscillation that he was unable to proceed; and after hanging a few moments by his hands, his feet having slipped from the knot on which they rested, he quitted his hold and fell to the ground.

He had nearly disconcerted the whole enterprise. There was an awful pause. None of the Mawabees attempted to mount. Sevajee began to grow impatient. Shaking the rope, and finding there was no weight upon it, he slid down to ascertain the cause. This was soon explained, but no one would venture to ascend. The Mahratta, unappalled by the general refusal, approached the man who had fallen, and instantly ordered him to mount. He refused, and Sevajee, without a moment's hesitation, plunged his crease into the rebel's heart. He now gave the same order to a second. Terrified at the fate of his companion, the Mawabee grasped the rope, and Sevajee followed close after, to prevent him from quitting his hold. With much difficulty they reached the top, when the undaunted Mahratta descended, and forced another of his followers to go before him. This he repeated until more than a dozen men had gained the parapet. Taking

courage from the success of their companions, the rest attempted the ascent one after another, until the whole were safely raised to the battlement.

Sevajee was the first to leap over the wall. A sentinel, alarmed at the noise, hastily approached; the Mahratta chief seized him by the cummerbund and the trousers, and swinging him over the parapet, cast him into the empty void beneath. He uttered a shrill shriek as he fell, which seemed to rise to the very heavens, like a sudden peal from the grave, so quick and piercing as to vibrate to the brain with a painful intensity. In a few moments the whole garrison were in arms, and the struggle commenced. They had, however, the double disadvantage of contending against superior numbers and the shock of sudden surprise; nevertheless, they resisted with the fury of madmen. They demanded no quarter, and none was given.

The whole garrison was cut off to a man, and the morning dawned upon a scene of carnage never to be forgotten. Not a single Mogul survived to tell the melancholy story of defeat, and the Mahratta chief took possession of Singurh amid the shouts of a sanguinary triumph. The bodies of the slain were flung over the battlements to be

devoured by birds and beasts of prey, their bones to whiten in the mountain wilds, under the scorching beams of a tropical sun, far from the home of their fathers, of their wives and little ones, and where the solemn rites of sepulture were denied to their remains.

By degrees, Sevajee obliged the imperial troops to evacuate the mountains; and after a while they were recalled to Delhi by Aurungzebe, who was exceedingly mortified at being thus perpetually baffled by a mountain chieftain, whose principle of government was a mere system of predatory warfare, in which he extended his political influence and his territory by any measure, however inconsonant to the general practices of military conduct. Sevajee now began to be conscious of his power, and determined therefore to seek more advantageous conquests. His career was attempted to be checked by Shaista Chan, an omrah high in the confidence of Aurungzebe. This general advanced with a formidable army against the Mahratta, and carried on his operations for some time with great success. Sevajee was unable to meet the Moguls in the field, and therefore had recourse to that mode of predatory and irruptive warfare which had hitherto been attended with

such success. The Mogul, however, somewhat altered his tactics in order to contravene those of his enemy, and with such advantage that he reduced Sevajee to considerable embarrassment. Finding that the imperial troops were daily obtaining a stronger footing in his dominions, having taken several of his forts, the Mahratta determined to have recourse to one of those bold and daring exploits for which his whole military career has been so celebrated, and which had invariably been attended with signal success.

Shaista Chan, having made himself master of Poonah, the capital of Sevajee's dominions, situated upon the banks of a considerable river, on the level country, about fifty miles from the Ghauts, occupied the palace of the Mahratta chief. The town was at this time little better than a village, surrounded by a low mud wall, and easily accessible from every quarter. Shaista, not imagining that the bold adventurer, who was only secure among the hills, would venture to attack him in the open country, was rather remiss in placing guards round the town to anticipate any sudden assault. Taking advantage of this remissness, Sevajee selected a small band of resolute soldiers, advanced towards Poonah, and concealed himself

in the neighbourhood. Having heard that a Mogul chief, jealous of Shaista Chan's influence with the Emperor, had secretly expressed strong sentiments of disaffection, he found means to tamper with him, and seduced him at length to favour his enterprise.

The residence of the imperial general was a large loose building composed entirely of mud. Having been admitted into the town about midnight, and the guards previously removed through the management of the treacherous Omrah, Sevajee and his followers, armed with pickaxes, attacked the frail wall, and soon forced an entrance into the cook-room. Raising a shout of exultation, they rushed into the interior of the house, brandishing their naked swords. At the head of them appeared their chief, encouraging them to the work of slaughter. Shaista, hearing the clamour, started from his bed; but not having time to arm himself, was obliged to make his escape through a window. In effecting this, however, he was severely wounded by the Mahratta chief, who severed one of the fingers from his right hand, and likewise slew his son. The Mogul general, overcome by this disaster, and dreading the further jealousy of his own officers, solicited his recall. He shortly after

quitted the Deccan, and the army being placed under an inactive commander, all military operations against the Mahrattas were for a time suspended, and Sevajee soon recovered what he had lately lost.

CHAPTER V.

Aurungzebe, exasperated beyond all bounds at being thus perpetually foiled by a petty chieftain, determined at once to stop the further progress of his arms. He therefore sent against him Mirza Rajah, a gallant Rajpoot, accustomed to make war in a mountainous country. Sevajee at length found himself opposed to a man whom he was unable to resist. As the Mogul army more than five times outnumbered his own, he was obliged to retreat to his mountain fastnesses, whither he was pursued by the victorious Mirza. All his fortresses shortly fell into the enemy's hands, and he was driven to extremity. At length, the fort in which he had placed all his treasure was invested.

It resisted for many weeks; but one morning, when the magazine was open to supply the garrison with powder, a paper kite, to which a blind match had been previously attached, was raised over the battlements and dropped into the com-

bustible repository. A tremendous explosion succeeded, and the fortress became an easy capture. Finding that he had no chance of being able to recover it, he resigned himself to his destiny, and upon receiving a solemn pledge from Mirza Rajah that he should meet at Delhi with a safe and honourable reception, he disbanded his army, and delivered himself up to the victorious Rajpoot.

On his arrival at Delhi, the Mahratta chief was ordered into the Emperor's presence, and commanded by the usher to make the usual prostration; but he refused to obey, and casting towards Aurungzebe a look of indignant scorn, expressed contempt for his person.

"I am now in your power," he said, haughtily; "but your victory over me has been to you a disgrace, and to me a triumph. You have subdued me by mere numerical force. For years, with a few hardy followers, I have battled your hosts. You have at length taken captive the object of your dread: but princes should not forget their pledges. When I delivered myself into the hands of your general, I was assured of honourable treatment. Am I then to be degraded by being commanded to prostrate myself before a man, even though he be Emperor of the Moguls? We are

both sovereigns, and be assured that the Mahratta chieftain will never pay that adoration to man which is due alone to God."

Aurungzebe did not condescend to reply. He was deeply incensed, and, turning to the usher, ordered that the refractory prisoner should be taken from his presence. In spite, however, of this rude bearing, the Emperor was much struck with the unbending boldness of the mountain warrior. He could not but feel respect for the man who had for years defeated his armies, and raised himself to sovereignty from being chief of a mere band of robbers. The exploits of Sevajee had reached as far as Delhi, and public curiosity was excited to see this remarkable man. His bearing in the imperial presence astonished all who heard him, nor were they less surprised at the forbearance of Aurungzebe, who was not generally backward in administering summary justice where occasion seemed to demand it.

It happened that, while the Mahratta chief was before the Emperor, the principal ladies of his harem saw what passed from behind a curtain. Among these was the Princess Rochinara, to whom the memory of Sevajee was still dear, though the lapse of years had somewhat weakened

her former impressions. She had never been allowed to see her child, nor would her father ever give her the least information respecting him. This was a bitter penalty for having degraded herself in the eyes of the haughty representative of the house of Timour, by an alliance with a petty chieftain, whom that proud potentate looked upon in no other light than that of a mere marauder. The princess had often sighed for the freedom she had enjoyed during her short abode in the mountains which overlooked the coast of Malabar.

When Sevajee appeared before the Emper all Rochinara's former partialities revived. She was struck with his lofty deportment of fearless independence. The toils and military enterprises of years had not abated the fire of his eye, or the beauty of his person. He was still the man to win alike a lady's love, and the warrior's admiration. When the princess perceived the silent indignation of her father, as he ordered the noble Mahratta to be removed from his presence, she trembled for the safety of a man whom she felt to be still dear to her. His boldness, and the reputation of his exploits, had won the admiration of many Omrahs of the Emperor's court, and they

interceded with their indignant master in behalf of the captive. Aurungzebe, notwithstanding their intercession, expressed his determination to confine Sevajee for life, recalling to mind with a bitterness which years had failed to mitigate, the disgrace he had heaped upon the house of Timour, by espousing, without her parent's consent, a princess of that illustrious race.

Hearing that her father was inexorable, Rochinara sought his presence, and falling at his feet, pleaded for the liberty of his prisoner, and endeavoured to extenuate his conduct at the late interview.

"Though I despise pomp," said the Emperor, in a tone of severe solemnity, "I will ever insist upon receiving those honours which the refractory presume to refuse. Power depends as much upon the empty pageantries and ceremonies of state as upon abilities and strength of mind. The former, in fact, are the most successful instruments of the latter. When the rebel, whom I have condescended to admit into my presence, knows how to honour the sovereign of the Moguls, he may expect his indulgence.

"Allow him, my father, another interview, but abate somewhat of the rigour of court form. In

his native mountains he has not learned to be courtly, but nature has taught him to be magnanimous; and let not Aurungzebe, though mighty, yield to him in this, or in any other quality which the brave respect.

"Well then, to please a daughter whom I love, I will indulge the haughty mountaineer with a remission of some portion of that state-ceremony which it is customary to offer in the imperial presence, and of that external homage which conquered princes owe to the Emperor of the Moguls."

A message was sent by Rochinara in the warmth of her zeal to the keeper of Sevajee's prison; and the Mahratta, without being consulted upon the measure, was introduced into the Dewan Aum, or hall of public audience. The corrugated brow and compressed lip, apparent to all present, as he entered, proclaimed in terms sufficiently intelligible his determination not to succumb to a superior.

When he had reached the centre of the hall, the usher advanced and commanded him to make the customary obeisance at the foot of the throne.

"I was born a prince," said Sevajee, "and am incapable of acting the part of a bondsman. Chains cannot enslave the soul of the free."

"But the vanquished," replied Aurungzebe, "lose all their rights with their fortune. The chance of war has made the Mahratta chief my servant, and I am resolved to relinquish nothing of what the sword has given."

"The chance of war has indeed placed me in your power; but not as your servant. I received the pledge of your general that I should be treated as a prince, not as a slave. I have yet to learn if the sovereign of a great empire can descend to the low and pitiable degradation of a lie."

"The law of the conqueror is his will — of the vanquished, obedience."

Sevajee turned his back upon the throne: Aurungzebe, losing his usual equanimity, started from his seat: his lip quivered, his cheek became blanched, his hand was laid upon his dagger, and he was about to issue some terrible order against Sevajee, when that prince turning towards him said, with an undaunted tone,

"Emperor of the Moguls, restore to me your daughter, whom you have torn from the protection of a husband, and I will honour you as a father; give me back my child, which you have withheld from the longings of a parent, and I will venerate you as a benefactor: restore me to my subjects,

and I, as a tributary prince, will acknowledge your supremacy: but be assured that no reverse of fortune can deprive me of my dignity of mind, which nothing shall extinguish but death."

The Emperor's wrath appeared to subside at this request, which he affected to treat as absurd. Pretending to look upon Sevajee as a madman, he ordered him from his presence and gave him in charge to the director-general of the imperial camp, who had orders to subject him to a rigorous confinement. He was in consequence imprisoned in that officer's house, and guarded with a vigilance that seemed to defy all chance of escape.

Months flew by, and Sevajee became extremely uneasy under his captivity, which was however relieved by occasional communications from the princess; she having contrived to convey information to him from time to time by means of a person who was permitted to enter his prison with flowers. This man was well known to the director-general, who had the highest confidence in him; but the gold of Rochinara and the promises of remuneration made by the Mahratta, corrupted the integrity of the vendor of flowers, and he finally became instrumental to one of the

most extraordinary escapes which the pen of history records. For weeks he had been in the habit of visiting the prisoner at stated periods, under the plea of selling him flowers, of which the latter affected to be extremely fond. Not the slightest suspicion was awakened.

One morning the usual attendant entered Sevajee's prison with his first meal, but to his astonishment found that the captive had escaped. Upon the floor lay a man apparently in deep slumber. He was upon his face, quite naked. An alarm was instantly raised, and the director-general hastened to the prison. The naked man turned out to be the flower-seller, whose sleep was so profound that he awoke with the greatest difficulty. Upon opening his eyes he appeared amazed at seeing himself naked, and no less so at being surrounded by inquisitive persons who questioned him concerning the prisoner's flight. He protested his utter ignorance of the matter, but observed that he had been evidently robbed of his clothes, though by whom he could not tell, unless the Mahratta had taken them the better to effect his purpose. He affected to be astonished at having been found in such a state of unpremeditated oblivion; but, as if struck by

some sudden recollection, he stated that Sevajee had induced him to drink a glass of sherbet, shortly after he entered his room, which he could now have no doubt had been drugged with opium, as he had swallowed it but a short time when he was overcome by a drowsiness which he could not control, and had evidently sunk down senseless from the powerful effects of the opiate. His story was sufficiently plausible; and, fortunately for him, under the sanction of his supposed integrity, was believed; the man thus eluded suspicion. An alarm was immediately raised, and a search made after the fugitive, but he was nowhere to be found. When the Emperor was informed that Sevajee had quitted his prison he was greatly exasperated, and ordered several bodies of men to be despatched in search of him; but his vexation was destined to receive a still greater aggravation, for shortly after the news had reached him of the Mahratta's escape, he discovered that his favourite daughter had become the partner of his flight.

CHAPTER VI.

Sevajee had found no difficulty in leaving his prison unsuspected, disguised as the flower vender, being about the same height, and loosely clad, according to the fashion of Eastern countries. As had been preconcerted between him and the princess, he repaired to the harem with his flowers, and the man whom he personated being known to the attendants, who were prevented from approaching his representative too nearly by some natural pretence, which women in the East are seldom at a loss to find in order to secure the success of any favourite scheme, Sevajee obtained admittance without incurring suspicion. It was now arranged that he should instantly hasten to a certain jungle, where he was to await the arrival of Rochinara, who, under pretence of devotion, would quit the city immediately, and join him at the appointed spot.

This plan was successfully executed. The empire being at this period in a state of general

peace, no rigid scrutiny was observed towards persons passing to and from the city as in more turbulent times. On leaving the gates, Rochinara gave orders to be carried towards a particular mosque: but no sooner had she got beyond the reach of observation, than she stepped out of her palankeen, commanded the bearers to wait for her at a certain spot, and declared her intention of proceeding with one favourite attendant to the sacred edifice. The men retired, and the princess quitting the high road, diverged from the mosque, and hastened towards the jungle.

Though utterly unaccustomed to such exercise, Rochinara and her woman made their way through a rough and unfrequented track to the place of appointment, being directed by the few casual passengers whom they happened to meet. They wisely confined their questions upon this point to pariahs, several of whom were passing on their way towards the same spot: these persons having so little intercourse with any but individuals of their own tribe, there was the less chance of detection from their communicating with the citizens, or with those who would, no doubt, be sent in pursuit of the fugitives.

After a tedious journey of full two hours, the

princess and her attendant joined Sevajee in the jungle. He had now cast off his disguise and resumed his own attire.

"We must travel alone through this forest," said he, "and when we reach its borders towards the south, I will provide a hackery for you and your companion, and we shall proceed with better chance of security; but we must avoid the public roads until we reach the coast. What think you, lady, of this?—'tis an arduous undertaking for tender limbs and gentle spirits."

"The daughter of Aurungzebe, Sevajee, will know how to meet difficulties. The energies of woman are not known until they are tried, and none of the race of Timour ever shrank from danger."

"Let us proceed then; our course lies amid perils, but they are already half overcome in the resolution to brave them."

They proceeded warily on their way, apprehensive that every sound might be the forerunner of discovery. The jungle was thick, but broken into frequent vistas, where they occasionally reposed from the fatigues of their journey, which were rendered more harassing from the circumstance of the travellers being frequently obliged to

make themselves a path, by putting aside with their hands the thick growth of underwood that impeded their progress.

Towards evening they halted in a small glen, which was entered by a defile formed by the proximity of two small hills. It was a sequestered spot in the heart of the forest. The jackal was already beginning to raise his dismal cry, and the occasional crackling of the bushes announced that they were not the only sojourners in the jungle. The travellers kindled a fire in order to keep off the beasts of prey, and Sevajee having fixed a bamboo in the ground, untwisted from his waist several folds of a close kind of calico, threw it over the pole, and thus formed a rude tent, under which he strewed some dried grass as a bed for the princess and her attendant.

The only access to this glen was through the defile already mentioned. The Mahratta therefore placed himself upon the road which immediately led to it in order to keep watch, lest any person sent by Aurungzebe in pursuit of the fugitives, should happen to take that track. The dense growth of the forest rendered it so dark that no object was to be discerned beyond the distance of a few paces; but Sevajee, having been much accus-

tomed to thread the jungles by night in his own native hills, had acquired a quickness of perception peculiar to himself in detecting the movements of approaching objects. For some time he trod the path of this forest solitude without any interruption; but at length the sound of distant footsteps caught his ear. He immediately advanced, and soon ascertained that a party of the Emperor's guard were approaching. It consisted of ten men. One of the soldiers preceded the rest, bearing a large torch. The Mahratta retreated quickly to the tent, extinguished the fire which had been kindled to scare the beasts of prey, and having roused the princess and her attendant, led them into a thicket on one side of the glen, where he desired they would remain until he should return.

"I go," said he, "to baffle our pursuers, who are now close upon our track. Should I fail, I am determined never to fall into their hands alive. For you there is mercy, for me none. Should I perish, return to your father, and he will still succour you."

"Never! I, wear a dagger, Sevajee, and the same hour that concludes your existence, shall likewise conclude mine. I shall not submit to another separation."

"The act I contemplate is desperate. If I succeed we are safe; if I fail, we are lost."

Having tenderly embraced Rochinara, he quitted her, and hurried to the defile. By this time the Moguls were within a hundred yards of the gorge. The Mahratta grasped a crease in either hand, and placed himself behind a short but thick shrub which grew on one side of the entrance to the defile. As soon as the man who carried the torch reached the place of his concealment, Sevajee stabbed him to the heart, seized the torch, and pressing his foot upon the flame, extinguished it, at the same moment plunging his second dagger into the breast of the officer who led the pa... This was the work but of a few moments. The confusion was indescribable. Sevajee, whose eye had been accustomed to the darkness was able to see his foes, though they could not perceive him. He stabbed four of them in succession, they being unable to perceive from whence the stroke of death came. His enemies knew not where to strike. Six already lay upon the earth weltering in their blood. Two others shortly shared the same fate;—another followed, and one only remained to be sent to a similar account. Upon him

the Mahratta sprang in his eagerness to complete the work of carnage, seized the sword with which his foe was armed, and wrested it from him; but with the exertion his crease fell, and he could not recover it.

They were now both unarmed, and the struggle was desperate. The Mogul was a tall powerful man, but no match for the Mahratta in activity and prompt vigour. He fell under the assault of his active adversary, yet still retained him in his grasp. Sevajee seized his prostrate enemy by the throat, and pressing him firmly upon the windpipe, endeavoured to strangle him; but the sudden agony imparted an impulsive energy to the Mogul, who, doubling his legs under Sevajee's body, suddenly raised him, and cast him to a distance of several feet upon his back.

It happened that in turning to regain his feet, the Mahratta accidentally placed his hand upon his enemy's sword, which had fallen to the ground during their strugle. He lost not a moment, but buried it in the Mogul's body before he could raise himself from his recumbent position. Thus, aided by the darkness, Sevajee destroyed ten men without receiving a wound.

Having paused a moment to breathe, after his

exertions, he rejoined the princess, whom he found anxiously awaiting his return. They passed the whole night in the thicket, exposed to the ravages of wild beasts, which, however, happily did not molest them, and on the following morning they pursued their dreary journey, encompassed by perils, which the princess bore with a heroism worthy the daughter of Aurungzebe. Having procured a couple of miserable tattoos,* at a village on the borders of the jungle, the travellers proceeded by easy stages, and without suspicion, to Muttra, thence to Benares and Jaggernaut. From the latter place they went round by Hydrabad, and at length found themselves among the native hills of the Mahratta chief, where his fierce but gallant followers soon rallied round him.

About the time of his daughter's flight the Emperor was taken ill, and for many weeks his life was despaired of. This circumstance considerably abated the eagerness of pursuit after the fugitives, as the attention of every one was directed to the danger of their sovereign. A gloom prevailed through the empire; for the wise policy adopted by Aurungzebe, in spite of his hollowness and hypo-

* Native ponies.

crisy, had rendered him the most popular monarch that ever sat upon the Mogul throne. With all his moral blemishes, his public character stood very high, and the general prosperity which his wise administration diffused, added to the rigid piety which seemed the mainspring of all his acts, rendered him an object of all but idolatry with a large portion of those who lived in ease and affluence under his wise supremacy. He at length recovered, to the universal joy of his subjects, and seemed to have forgotten his daughter's flight.

A youth now appeared at court, in whom the Emperor took great interest, but whose birth and parentage was a mystery. No one could tell to whom he belonged, or whence he came, and yet the Emperor treated him with marks of distinguished favour. He was a remarkably handsome young man, had just entered his seventeenth year, and was eminently expert in every military exercise. In all hunting excursions, honoured by the sovereign's presence, he was the foremost to court peril, and always successful in pursuing the dangerous adventures of the chase. He soon excited the attention of the Omrahs by his daring, and the singular skill which he displayed in feats of arms. Who he could be, was

a frequent inquiry; but on this question the profoundest political sages appeared just as ignorant as the most unlettered menials.

The young man gradually won the good opinion of all. His courtesy and amenity of manners were no less conspicuous than the more chivalric features of his character. Aurungzebe was gratified at the general approbation awarded to his favourite, and lost no opportunity of strengthening the flattering impression. In several incursions of the rebellious Usbecks, this youth had distinguished himself, and the Emperor looked forward to his becoming one of the most conspicuous leaders of his time. He was not only remarkable for his superiority in military exercises, but his talents in the cabinet were likewise highly promising, and though he was an object of jealousy to some of the nobles, who were mortified at seeing a stranger and a mere youth so flattered by their sovereign, yet with the majority he was a great and deserved favourite.

CHAPTER VII.

SEVAJEE on his return, finding that there was no enemy to oppose him, soon regained the territory which he had lost during his captivity. All the mountain forts again fell into his hands, and he found himself in a better condition than ever to frustrate the supremacy of the Mogul Emperor in Southern India. In a few months this enterprising warrior was at the head of an army of fifty thousand soldiers, all daring men, accustomed to the privations and fatigues of mountain warfare, and possessing that activity, hardihood, and bodily energy peculiar to mountaineers. Calculating his power, Sevajee determined upon some exploit that should signalize his return from what he considered a humiliating bondage. Assembling a body of fifteen thousand choice troops, he marched towards Surat, during the rains, when an assault from enemies was the least expected.

One morning a Banian entered that city, offering various stuffs for sale. Being a facetious man,

as indeed most of those itinerant traders are, and having a quantity of choice brocades, he readily found admittance into the houses of the opulent citizens. Surat at this time was surrounded only by a slight mud wall, a very insufficient defence against the attacks of a daring enemy ; but secure in their immense wealth and commercial importance, the citizens never seem to have thought upon a hostile attack from any quarter, and it being now the period of the monsoon, they slumbered in perfect security. The Banian visited all parts of Surat with his pack, meeting everywhere with a flattering reception, and especially in the houses of the wealthy merchants. For three days he continued in the city. When he had sold all his merchandize, he departed with the general goodwill of the citizens.

In order to mislead the inhabitants of Surat, Sevajee had divided his forces into two bodies, with which he encamped before two important places, as if about to besiege them. Suddenly he ordered the troops to withdraw from those places, leaving only small parties who had received his instructions to keep up a continued clamour, and have lights burning during the night, in order to give the appearance of a large army en-

camped on the spot. These devices were completely successful in lulling the suspicions of the citizens of Surat. The streets were thronged by day with thrifty traders, the bazaars with busy chafferers, who by night reposed in unapprehensive safety. In the midst of their slumbers, however, they were roused by the din of arms. Starting from their beds, they were stunned with the shrieks of women and the cries of men. The confusion was indescribable. An enemy was within the walls, but amid the darkness it was impossible to distinguish friends from foes. The clash of arms was everywhere heard, mingled with the groans of the dying and the shrieks of the despairing. Terror magnified the danger. The enemy appeared an overwhelming host, sweeping through the streets like a torrent, and spreading death around like a blast of the Simoom. There was little or no resistance. A long and indolent security seemed to have unnerved every arm, and the bad cause triumphed.

Day dawned, and presented a spectacle of general devastation. The Mahrattas had become masters of Surat. The Banian who had received the hospitality of its citizens was recognized in the Mahratta chief, who now reclaimed without an

equivalent, the merchandise which he had so lately sold. The mercy of the conqueror was propitiated by submission to the pillage which he directed to be made. He permitted no bloodshed after the surrender, but practically showed, however, that he fully understood the law of appropriation. All the rich merchants and factors were obliged to exhibit their stores, and redeem them at a valuation. For three days the work of plunder continued, but no personal violence was offered to any of the inhabitants. When Sevajee had satisfied his appetite for pillage, and that of his troops, he retired from the city of Surat, with booty supposed to have exceeded in value one million sterling.

Aurungzebe was exceedingly mortified when he heard of this daring violation of the laws of honourable warfare; looking upon it as an act of mere predatory aggression, at once unbecoming a soldier and a prince. He now took the same resolution which he had already so frequently acted upon, but with little eventual success, of sending an army against Sevajee that should extinguish his power for ever. Accordingly he ordered a hundred thousand men under command of an experienced and active general to proceed to the Deccan.

The young favourite already mentioned was made second in command, and marched with the high and proud hope of distinguishing himself in the field against the most formidable enemy of his sovereign. His birth was a general mystery, but such were his popular virtues, that although Aurungzebe had raised him to a post of distinction about his own person, still this advancement had excited little jealousy among the nobles, who generally admitted him to be deserving of such honour.

When the Mogul army reached the Deccan, they found Sevajee at the head of a numerous force. By adopting his usual system of mountain strategy, harassing his enemy by sudden surprises, cutting off their supplies, falling upon straggling parties, and keeping up continued alarms in their camp, the indefatigable Mahratta soon thinned their ranks, and reduced them to considerable distress. He carefully avoided meeting his enemies in the open field, conscious, not only of his own numerical inferiority, but of the superior discipline of the Moguls. By no stratagem could they withdraw him from his mountain fastnesses. The troops at length became dispirited, and clamoured either to be led at once against the mountaineers, or return to the imperial city,

as they were wasting their energies in difficult marches and skirmishes, without coming into fair contact with a foe.

In order to still these murmurings, the youthful officer, who had been appointed second in command, offered to lead a detachment of twenty thousand troops among the hills, and engage the enemy upon his own ground. This proposal was acceded to by the general in chief. The young commander repaired with his detachment to the mountains. Sevajee, as usual, avoided a conflict until he could avail himself of some advantage of position.

One morning the Mogul camp was suddenly attacked, but the young general forming his squadrons behind their tents, soon repulsed the assailants, and pursuing them into the gorges of the mountains, slew many, and took several prisoners. In the heat of pursuit he was separated from his troops. Turning into a narrow valley, he received an arrow discharged by some hidden archer, through the fleshy part of his left arm. Heated by the ardour of pursuit, and pained by the wound, he spurred forward, forgetting that he was alone. Suddenly his horse was shot under him: he fell—but almost instantly springing upon

his feet, looked round and perceived that he was not followed by a single Mogul. Just as he was preparing to retrace his steps, he saw an armed Mahratta advancing towards him. Calmly awaiting his approach, and perceiving that he was no common enemy, the Mogul cried—"Do I see the leader of the Mahrattas?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because of all others he is the man I would meet hand to hand."

"Then you may enjoy your wish, for Sevajee stands before you."

There was no further parley; the two leaders encountered with mutual animosity. The struggle was fierce but short. The Mogul, being embarrassed by the wound in his arm, and somewhat enfeebled by consequent loss of blood, was unable to bring his best energies to the encounter. Sevajee was superior both in strength and activity, and very soon struck his adversary to the earth by a severe sabre-stroke on the head. The Mogul, being stunned, was quite at the mercy of his foe; but that foe was as generous as he was brave. Struck with the youth and beauty of his enemy, Sevajee supported the youth's head, and opening his vest to expedite the recall of his senses, saw to

his astonishment the distinct mark of a spear-head upon the right breast. Raising a clear shrill cry, in a few moments he was surrounded by his followers, whom he ordered to lift the wounded officer and bear him to one of his mountain fortresses in the neighbourhood. The blow which he had received on the head was so severe as to render him insensible: the sabre had, nevertheless, inflicted no wound. The numerous folds of his turban had repelled it.

Upon recovering his consciousness, the young Mogul perceived that he was in the hands of his enemy. The wound in his arm had been dressed and carefully bandaged, and in the course of that evening he became an inmate of one of Sevajee's strongholds. On the following day he was brought into the presence of Rochinara, who greeted him with a courtesy which seemed to throw a gleam of sunshine upon his captivity.

Sevajee approaching him with a bland air besought him to bare his bosom. He immediately exposed it to the view of the princess, who, gazing at him for a moment in speechless astonishment, rushed forward, threw herself upon his neck and covered it with her tears. "My child," at length, she cried — "my long lost son, you are come here

to freedom and to joy ; in your vanquisher behold a parent,—in me behold a mother. That mark upon your breast, stamped there before the light of heaven had beamed upon the embryo babe, is too strong and unerring a signature by God's hand to be mistaken."

The youth's astonishment was extreme, but there were certain passages in his life with which he alone was familiar, that to his mind perfectly ratified what he now heard, and elucidated what to his mind had ever been wrapped in painful secrecy. Sevajee embraced his son, who told them that a mystery had always hung over his birth, which he had in vain endeavoured to unravel. He had been brought up at a solitary village, in a family with whom, though treated with kindness, he was not happy. He had been instructed by a learned Mussulman in the literature of his country, and his natural predilection for all manly exercises naturally led him to become an adept in the use of arms. He was treated with evident deference by the person who had the charge of his infancy, which always induced him to suspect that his birth was above their condition. At the age of fifteen being summoned to the court of Aurungzebe, he was immediately distinguished by his sovereign, and shortly raised to a post of responsibility.

The meeting between the long-lost son and his parents was one of tender and reciprocal congratulation. Sambajee, by which name he was henceforward known, was too much rejoiced at having been restored to his parents to feel any desire of returning to the imperial court.

As soon as his wound was sufficiently healed to enable him to venture out, he rejoined the Mogul army. As he was extremely beloved by the troops, among whom was a large body of Rajpoots, he had no difficulty in persuading those more especially under his own command, to revolt from the Emperor and join the forces of Sevajee. To the surprise and consternation of the Mogul general, in one night nearly one half of his army went over to the Mahrattas, and left him no longer in a condition to face those formidable enemies of the state. Breaking up his encampment, therefore, he returned to Delhi with the news of his ill success, occasioned by the revolt of the troops and their union with the foe. Aurungzebe could not repress his indignation at these tidings. He now saw that the strength of his enemy was increased to such a degree as to render him a dangerous rival;—that the harmony of his family was disturbed, and his favourite, on whom he had lavished honours, and

whom he had intended to advance to still higher distinctions, had turned traitor.

Sevajee now became the most powerful prince of Southern India. He could muster an army of fifty thousand foot and a hundred thousand horse. Dreaded by the neighbouring potentates, and having raised the reputation of his arms by foiling the legions of Aurungzebe, he determined to satisfy his pride and dazzle his followers by a formal coronation, modelled upon that of the Mogul, in which the weighing against gold, and other pompous ceremonies were not omitted. Gifts to an immense value, bestowed upon Brahmins, gave lustre to this as well as to other high political festivals.

From this time the prosperity of Sevajee continued without abatement until his death, which happened in the year 1680, at the age of fifty, and he was succeeded by his son Sambajee. The princess Rochinara did not long survive him.

THE END.

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